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GCSE pass rate set for record rise

Judith Judd
Education Editor

GCSE results, which will be released to 600,000 young people tomorrow, are expected to show a record pass-rate.

The increase will trigger a renewed argument about whether standards are sliding, but examiners and academics are confident that the improvement shows a genuine advance in students' performance.

The proportion of exam entries awarded grades A* - C, the equivalent of a pass under the old O-levels, is understood to have risen by just over 1 per cent, to around 55 per cent.

The percentage of passes has gone up every year since the GCSE exam replaced O-levels nine years ago, but recent increases have been lower than those in the exam's early days. Last year's rise was 1 per cent.

Increases in the percentage of pupils awarded the two top grades of A* or A are levelling off in some subjects.

This year's figures are expected to continue last year's trend, with the total number of examinations entered failing to keep pace with the growing number of 16-year-olds.

Several major subjects are expected to show a fall in the number of entries. Teachers' leaders blamed the fall on schools' decisions to hold back weak candidates to boost their exam league table positions. League tables, introduced in 1991, show the proportion of pupils gaining five A* - C.

But the Department for Education said at the time that schools had no incentive to withdraw weak pupils, as the figures are based on the total



that the least able pupils are being neglected as schools concentrate on those capable of getting C grades.

The Government has already set national targets for 11-year-olds in English and maths. Officials from the Department for Education and the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority are investigating how schools could set targets for GCSE performance.

The improvement in GCSE results will bring criticism from traditionalists that the exam is less tough than the old O-level.

However, exam officials say that GCSE exams are subject to strict monitoring by the curriculum authority and checks are carried out to ensure that standards for all exam boards are comparable.

Alan Smithers, professor of public policy at Brunel University, said last night: "I do think that this improvement is genuine, as teachers and students become more familiar with the requirements of what is needed to do well."

He said that those who believed standards had fallen had failed to understand how exams had changed. The purpose of O-level was to pick out the brightest, but the aim of the GCSE was to have a worthwhile qualification for everyone.

Student teachers may be offered "salaries" to forestall a recruitment crisis. Senior officials at the Department for Education have discussed back-dating part of a qualified teacher's salary.

The National Association of Head Teachers will propose such a scheme in its evidence to the review body on teacher pay. Applications for teacher training have fallen sharply this year.

Surf's up - and it's hotter than Barbados



Wave-power: Britons are flocking to the coast as the temperature shows no sign of dipping

Photograph: David Swanborough

Louise Hancock
and Lucy McDonald

not to get too hot under the collar.

The heatwave is raising temperatures in more ways than one, according to Relate, which anticipates an increased number of calls after the holiday period. Julia Cole, a Relate counsellor, said: "The hot weather will be magnifying

problems because, as people are stressed out, they are less likely to be patient and are more likely to snap at their partner.

"During periods of hot weather, people drink a lot more, especially alcohol, and we know alcohol and marital relationships don't mix - and can lead to violence."

The RAC has recorded a higher than normal number of callouts as vehicles and drivers' tempers overheat. "Without question, drivers do become less tolerant as the temperature goes up and levels of aggression and confrontation do increase."

Holidaymakers in Barbados had to make do with a high of 30C yesterday, while Londoners sweltered in 32C. Forecasters are predicting that the humid weather will persist over the next few days, with a risk of localised thunderstorms.

The Bank Holiday weekend will bring cooler temperatures in the west, but warm and muggy weather elsewhere.

Third MP suspended by Labour

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

Labour suspended its third MP in as many months last night after an internal inquiry found the Renfrewshire member Tommy Graham guilty of sneaking a number of his colleagues. One of them, the Paisley South MP Gordon McMaster, committed suicide last month.

Nick Brown, the party's chief whip, ordered disciplinary action against Mr Graham - a decision which overshadowed yesterday's launch of the "yes" campaign for Scottish devolution - but cleared him of any part in the death. Labour will now hold a further inquiry into Mr Graham's conduct and send in a task force to look at the running of his constituency.

Mr Brown found that Mr Graham spread unfounded rumours about Mr McMaster's private life. A note left by the

MP accused both Mr Graham and Labour's former deputy chief whip, Don Dixon, of conspiring against him.

Mr Brown said: "The whole affair has had the effect of bringing the party into disrepute and destabilising local politics in Renfrew. I do, of course, make no presumption of guilt."

Mr Graham said in a statement last night that he welcomed the chance to answer the allegations and clear his name.

Tom Sawyer, the party's general secretary, will oversee the further investigations. Labour will co-operate with a police investigation into claims that public money was used to fund a company which laundered drug money - one Labour councillor and one former councillor connected with the firm have been suspended.

A statement issued last night said there were "serious grounds for investigation", including allegations that Mr Graham had maintained connections with a suspended councillor, Paul Mack. A separate statement from Mr Sawyer said the party's Na-



Tommy Graham: Said to have spread unfounded rumours

tional Executive Committee would carry out the further investigation while the task force would report to him. Mr Graham's constituency would be run under his direct supervision in the interim. It said there would also be a probe into the running of the Paisley North constituency, whose MP, Irene Adams, was a close friend of Mr McMaster's.

Two Paisley North members had been accused of trying to get Mr Mack elected as a councillor after he was suspended. It said there would also be a full membership check in Paisley South.

Mr Sawyer said: "Labour is an open and democratic party. We will not tolerate malpractice or any activities which do not uphold our high standards."

Yesterday Mr Mack, a former deputy leader of Renfrew District Council who is now an independent councillor, said the

report's conclusions went against natural justice.

Raymond Robertson, the chairman of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Association and a former Scottish Office minister, called for a full public inquiry into the allegations about the Labour Party in Scotland last night.

"It is no longer good enough for Labour to promise internal inquiries and to pledge to put its own house in order. The lesson of recent weeks is that Labour are simply unable to take the effective action necessary," he said.

Two other Labour MPs have been suspended since May 1. Mohammed Sarwar, the member for Glasgow Govan, was accused of trying to bribe an election rival and Bob Wareing, member for Liverpool Derby, was found to have failed to register an interest in an Eastern European company.

Four more scientists hit by animal activists

Alexandra Williams

Four more scientists at Oxford University have suffered attacks by animal rights activists, trying to draw attention to a fellow activist who is on hunger strike in jail.

The new cases emerged last night after The Independent highlighted an assault on Professor Colin Blakemore, whose car was vandalised at his Oxfordshire home on Saturday.

Yesterday, the Animal Liberation Front phoned The Independent claiming responsibility for the Blakemore attack and admitting a further four attacks on Oxford University scientists on the same night.

Barry Horne, a remand pris-

oner in Bristol Prison, began his hunger strike on 11 August. He claims the Government has reneged on pre-election promises on animal experimentation.

Robin Webb, spokesman for the ALF, said: "Five torturers all had their vehicles done and some of their homes were targeted. This is to show support for Barry Horne and disgust at the Government and scientists who use animals. The severity of actions can be escalated."

The ALF gave The Independent a list of those targeted on Saturday. One named, said: "Paintstripper was thrown over my car, the tyres were slashed and the words 'Murderous scum' were sprayed on my drive. In the past, my children

have been approached. We have been warned they were going to hot up their campaign."

The scientists said they had little knowledge of the hunger strike.

Professor John Hopewell, director of research at the Research Institute, Oxford, said: "I do not even know the name Barry Horne but my house was vandalised. In the past I've been targeted but this is the first time my house has been damaged. It's a nuisance but it's a bazaar of the job these days."

Professor Blakemore, whose family has been the focus of attack for more than 10 years, said: "These people are playing judge, jury and executioner. We will not tolerate terrorism. And to say this is linked with

Barry Horne, well - I am not in charge of releasing prisoners, I am not even aware of the charges against him. And I am not responsible for setting up a Royal Commission."

Mr Horne, charged with possessing explosive devices with intent to damage property, staged a 35-day hunger strike earlier this year. He said: "The pledges that were made by Labour were nothing more than empty words - they have no intention of helping the animals."

Mr Webb said: "We have a letter dated December from Elliot Morley, Parliamentary Secretary of the Commons, saying: 'We are proposing a Royal Commission to investigate the claims that animals need to be used and to recommend on alternatives'."

What happened to that?" A Home Office spokeswoman said a Royal Commission was unnecessary.

Referring to Mr Morley's comments she said: "December was a long time before the election. Besides, we already have an excellent source of independent advice - the Animal Procedures Committee."

Last year 2.7 million procedures were performed using animals, an increase of 0.3 per cent on 1995. (One procedure is roughly equivalent to one animal.) However, since 1974, when 5.5 million were used, the number has more than halved. Ninety per cent of the animals are used for medical research and development. Cosmetics constitute 0.1 per cent.

BP damages offer

BP said it would suspend its \$1.4m damages claim against Greenpeace if it agreed to allow it to continue drilling for oil in the Atlantic.

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Laura Ashley jobs go

Laura Ashley announced the closure of two factories in Wales, with the loss of almost 200 jobs.

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Malaria threat

Malaria, one of the world's biggest killers, is defying new treatments.

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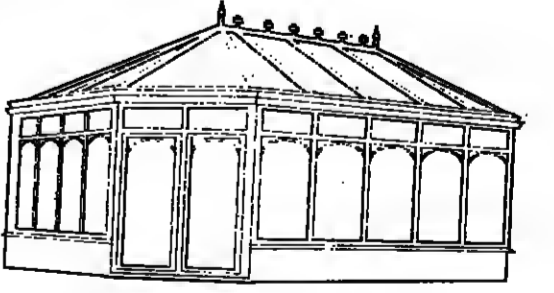
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Mike Bowen, 52, and his 19-year-old son Victor were arrested at 6am by detectives investigating the disappearance of the 53-year-old catering worker. The two men were being interviewed by detectives at separate police stations.

Police yesterday confirmed that they were treating the case as suspicious, although they are still looking for Mrs Bowen, of Llanidloes, Merionethshire. She was last seen being dropped off at a bus stop in Newport, Gwent, by her husband, who has earlier accused her of having an affair and announced he was starting divorce proceedings. Mr Bowen, a forestry worker, issued an emotional plea for his wife to contact police after she disappeared. He revealed she had recently been in hospital and was depressed after receiving treatment for rheumatoid arthritis.

Detective Inspector Terry Haggood, of Gwent Police, said: "We are now treating Mrs Bowen's disappearance as suspicious, and foul play is suspected."

A man accused of murdering 18-year-old Eliza Ward in the Belfast restaurant where they both worked was attacked in the dock at a magistrates' court yesterday. Gerard Patrick Stewart, 20, of Iris Drive, Belfast, had just been charged with the murder of a 17-year-old girl when he was assaulted by a man who forced his way into the dock. He grabbed Stewart by the neck and started to punch him around the head and face, then appeared to try to gouge his eyes.

It took police several minutes to restore order and detain the attacker. An RUC inspector said the incident was being investigated. Ms Ward was stabbed to death at Café Society, where she was manageress, on 17 July. The restaurant owner, Renee Lea, 52, was stabbed in the back in the same incident and Stewart, who was employed as a kitchen porter, is also charged with her attempted murder. He was remanded in custody until 16 September.



The teacher and 16 children who died in the Dunblane massacre were yesterday remembered in a poignant ceremony to name two rose bushes in their memory.

The Gwen Mayor and Innocence roses were chosen by Mrs Mayor's husband Rod (pictured) and the families of the children who were killed last year. Sixteen Innocence plants and a single Gwen Mayor bush were planted to form the centrepiece on a roundabout in Dunblane. The ceremony took place on the 10th anniversary of

another gun atrocity, in which 16 people died in Hungerford, Berkshire. The roses were developed by James Cocker and Sons, Aberdeen, with the support of the Dunblane Fund.

Three girls were arrested yesterday by police investigating an incident in which an 83-year-old woman was terrorised in her house for two hours before being burgled.

One of the girls, 17-year-old Rosalind, aged 13, police said. An 18-year-old boy was arrested at the same time for allegedly handling stolen goods. A Scotland Yard spokesman said the four had been arrested at addresses in Hounslow and Chiswick, west London, and were being questioned in various police stations.

Rosie Howes was left suffering from "psychological trauma" after her ordeal at her home in west London on Sunday.

An 18-year-old man who was gunned down in a street by a killer who placed a gun against his head may have been murdered as part of an argument over drugs, it emerged yesterday.

Joel Nubie, who lived with his mother and stepfather in the Winson Greco area of Birmingham, was found lying in the street on Monday night after he was shot in the forehead at point-blank range. There were reports of an argument taking place in the area at the time of the murder. Police said that the dead man was not a "hardcore" street criminal, although Mr Nubie was known to police and had a previous conviction for possessing a small amount of crack cocaine. The Winson Greco area has been the scene of gang feuds and police are investigating drug links to the killing, but have no evidence so far to suggest that this was the cause of the violence. Detective Chief Inspector Adrian McAllister said it was a "cold-blooded, calculated killing".

Jason Bennetto

The threat of restricting the use of the off-peak Network Card for almost half a million rail passengers has been derailed following the intervention of the rail regulator.

The 17 companies that issue the cards, including Stagecoach, Virgin, Concession and Great Western, received protests from passenger groups and the rail regulator, John Swift QC. Originally the operators had wanted the card, which is regularly used by 430,000 travellers, not to be allowed on any train leaving London stations on weekdays between 4pm and 7.30pm. This move has been abandoned, but, because the price of the card is not regulated, train companies will increase the cost of the discount card by more than 40 per cent - from £14 to £20.

Randee Ramesh

Marcelle d'Argy-Smith, the woman whose Franco-Syriean name, all-year tan and dedication to the magazine in dark, curly hair made her the structural graphic magazine editor at *Cosmopolitan*, has been asked to take charge of the more sedate *Woman's Journal*.

Ms. Smith, 50, left *Cosmo* in a blaze of publicity in 1995 after a "mutual agreement" with Terry Mansfield, the managing director of Cosmopolitan publisher NetMag. Industry rumors suggested that Mr. Mansfield wished to spice up the magazine to see off the threat from rival Marie Claire. Ms. Smith said they had "wonderful moments and terrible hot hours" together.

Where *Cosmopolitan* concentrates on sex and relationships, *Woman's Journal*—published by IPC Magazines, the publisher of *Marie Claire*—is aimed at what it describes as the "no-age woman." In reality this means women aged 35 to 55 who have probably already sorted out their relationships.

Woman's Journal is more interested in the search for clothes that fit the fuller figure than the search for the perfect orgasm, but that may be about to change. "It's a magazine for the grown-up woman, and she is becoming more conscious," said Ms. Smith yesterday.

"I know how the fabulous chance to draw in those women, talk to them... turn them on... After all they're most of my best friends."

When she left *Cosmo* she informed the world that the telephone had not stopped ringing and the bouquets of flowers had not stopped arriving. Since then, however, she has been working as a freelance journalist writing about "downshifting" your career and appearing in lifestyle columns. She also worked as a presenter on BBC daytime television and host of *Down Your Way* on BBC Radio 4.

IPC described Ms. Smith yesterday as a legend in women's magazines. The previous editor, Dairine Vine, has left to spend more time with her family, according to a company spokeswoman.

Paul McCann

A retired steelworker and his wife – thought to be longest-married couple in the country – celebrated their 75th wedding anniversary yesterday.

Ninety-nine-year-old Tom Blacker and his wife Rene, 97, of Thyrberry, near Rotherham, South Yorkshire, marked the occasion with a party for their family, which spans five generations.

The year that Mr and Mrs Blacker were married, 1922, saw the birth of the Irish Free State and of the BBC. The Irish Nationalist leader Michael Collins was shot and killed while the Blackers were on their honeymoon in Whitby.

They had one son, Peter – now aged 74 – and their family includes 15 great-grandchildren and four great-great-grandchildren.

The couple (pictured above) are believed to be Britain's oldest married couple, and their

The former footballer and television presenter John Fashanu, cleared earlier this month of match-rigging charges, yesterday defended his decision to stay silent throughout his trial.

Mr Fashanu, 34, insisted he had been totally vindicated by the outcome of the trial and that "no shred of evidence" had been produced against him. But he refused to explain why he had earned a bank account in someone else's name and why money had supposedly been paid into other people's accounts on his behalf.

He said he did not accept that the trial judge's decision to order him to pay his estimated £650,000 costs implied any shadow of guilt on his part. He insisted: "The verdict has already stated categorically that I'm not guilty and the fact that I intend to appeal against having to pay the costs underlines that even more."

EDUCATION

Students unprepared for cost of university life

cost of university life
Most students believe that they will get through university without having to borrow any money despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

A new study by NatWest bank shows that 61 per cent do not expect to take out loans: in practice tens of thousands students graduate with five-figure debts.

Researchers questioned 1,200 A-level students just days after the Government announced that, from next September, students will be asked to pay £1,000 a year towards their tuition fees, at present paid wholly by the taxpayer. Students already take out loans towards living costs. Nearly a quarter of the students questioned gave no figures for rent or bills when they were asked to plan the costs of undergraduate living, but 55 per cent made an allowance for the council tax even though students do not have to pay it.

The bank advises students to live in university-owned housing for their first year because they will then know exactly how much they need to pay for accommodation each term. It also suggests that they should have only one current account as students with more than one are likely to have bigger debts – and that they should also apply for a government loan in plenty of time, as the money may take longer to arrive than they expect.


Judith Judd

TV viewers tune into new format

The observational documentary looks set to take over from traditional studio quiz and chat shows as the new light entertainment format following the success of *Airport*, BBC's fly-on-the-wall documentary about Heathrow.

Airport — which attracted a consistent audience of between 9 and 10 million viewers, according to the latest BARB audience figures — beat ITV's *Ain't It Awful?* starring Robson Green and Jerome Flynn, and *Undercover Customs* which ran against it. It was only stopped from topping the BBC's ratings by *EastEnders*' 14 million viewers.

The success of the fly-on-the-wall programme's second series follows big audiences for *Driving School*, the BBC's painfully funny documentary set about people having driving lessons. The efforts of one pupil Maureen Rees (right) made her into a national celebrity. Paul McCann



Banks 'short-changing customers'

Millions of bank customers are being short-changed on their current account interest, a report claimed yesterday.

According to the latest banking survey from the Abbey National, about 16 million of the UK's 61 million current account holders receive no interest at all on their credit balances - an estimated £130m loss in potential interest per year. But the report emphasised it was not just those with non-interest bearing accounts who are losing out. About a third of customers, or 12.5 million accounts, who are paid interest on their funds, said they were dissatisfied with the rate they receive - mainly because of the flat rate they were paid, irrespective of their balance amount.

Of particular concern, the report said, is that nearly 2.5 million customers are still very unhappy with their current existing current account, while just under a million are "extremely dissatisfied". Two out of five blame their discontent on shoddy levels of service and errors made on their accounts, while one in three are dissatisfied with service charges such as duplicate statements and stopped cheques.

Doctors in call for free condoms

Condoms should be available free on the NHS from a wider variety of outlets to help combat unwanted teenage pregnancies, doctors said yesterday.

The British Medical Association said consideration should be given to handing out free condoms in chemist's shops because teenagers tend to avoid GP surgeries for contraceptive advice and men don't like going to family planning clinics. Free condoms are already available free. A spokesman said the additional cost was balanced by the enormous cost to the NHS of unwanted pregnancies. The BMA recommendation is made in its evidence to a government committee reviewing prescription procedure and the supply of medicines.

Jeremy Laurence

Chatlines facing new controls

People whose phones are used to run up bills to "virtual" chatlines without their permission should be compensated, a telephone watchdog said today.

More than 15 million calls worth £30m are made each year to the chat-lines in which callers exchange recorded messages rather than have live conversations. In the first half of this year, 210 complaints were received about high bills from "virtual" chat-lines, 55 of them about high bills and allegations of unauthorised use. Disputed bills range from less than £10 to hundreds of pounds and "a handful" of bills running into four figures.

ICSTS, the premium rate phone line watchdog, said although the number of complaints was small in relation to the high volume of calls, it wants all operators to put better systems in place to handle bill disputes.

Under the proposed new guidelines, the watchdog would have the power to compel service providers to compensate customers with valid claims if the dispute could not be resolved. It is also calling for a crackdown on under-18s using the services and wants operators to warn customers after each £10 spent on a call to help them keep track of mounting costs. If accepted, the proposals would be binding on all virtual-chatline operators. Live chatlines were effectively banned from the telephone network after companies failed to pay into a fund set up to compensate people whose phones had been used without their permission.

General Summary and Outlook

Northern Ireland will start cloudy with some occasional rain, but it should become bright and warm this afternoon. Western Scotland, Wales and the West Country will also be quite warm but there will be a good deal of cloud and some showery rain. Eastern Scotland, northern England, the West Midlands and central southern England will have hot sunshine but an increase in cloud this afternoon may bring showers or thunderstorms. Eastern and south-eastern England should be mainly fine and hot with sunny spells. Tomorrow, eastern and south-eastern England will have another hot day with hazy sunshine, but local thundery downpours are possible. Wales and the rest of England will have warm sunshine, but the western fringes will turn cloudier later as patchy rain over Scotland edges south-eastwards. Most places will be dry and sunny on Friday, but showers are likely in northern Scotland. The weekend will be unsettled in the west but hot in the east.

High U will drift eastward. Low L is slow moving. Just Lower L. N. and O will come north-ward.

Warm front

Cold front

Occluded front

WORLD WEATHER WEATHER, MIDDAY (GMT) ^a cloudy; ^b cloudy; ^c fog; ^d fog; ^e heavy mist; ^f rain; ^g rain; ^h rain; ⁱ rain; ^j rain; ^k rain; ^l rain; ^m rain; ⁿ rain; ^o rain; ^p rain; ^q rain; ^r rain; ^s rain; ^t rain; ^u rain; ^v rain; ^w rain; ^x rain; ^y rain; ^z rain; ^{aa} rain; ^{ab} rain; ^{ac} rain; ^{ad} rain; ^{ae} rain; ^{af} rain; ^{ag} rain; ^{ah} rain; ^{ai} rain; ^{aj} rain; ^{ak} rain; ^{al} rain; ^{am} rain; ^{an} rain; ^{ao} rain; ^{ap} rain; ^{aq} rain; ^{ar} rain; ^{as} rain; ^{at} rain; ^{au} rain; ^{av} rain; ^{aw} rain; ^{ax} rain; ^{ay} rain; ^{az} rain; ^{ba} rain; ^{bb} rain; ^{bc} rain; ^{bd} rain; ^{be} rain; ^{bf} rain; ^{bg} rain; ^{bh} rain; ^{bi} rain; ^{bj} rain; ^{bk} rain; ^{bl} rain; ^{bm} rain; ^{bn} rain; ^{bo} rain; ^{bp} rain; ^{bq} rain; ^{br} rain; ^{bs} rain; ^{bt} rain; ^{bu} rain; ^{bv} rain; ^{bw} rain; ^{bx} rain; ^{by} rain; ^{bz} rain; ^{ca} rain; ^{cb} rain; ^{cc} rain; ^{cd} rain; ^{ce} rain; ^{cf} rain; ^{cg} rain; ^{ch} rain; ^{ci} rain; 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London, Richmond Park between Kingston Gate and Hans Gate closed for roadworks until Oct 31.

London, A306 Finsbury Heath Bridge. Closed until January 1998.

Sturmy, M25 J8-10. Lane closures both ways until further notice.

Staffordshire, A50 Stoke on Trent. Major works at M61 until March 1998.

Leicestershire, M1 J24 and Sawley Island. Work for the new Derby Southern Bypass.

Greater Manchester, A58 Park Rd. Closed southbound between the A6 and Cheadles Way. Diversion via A6 and Bolton Road until Oct 24.

Merseyside, A567 Bootle. Stanley Rd closed northbound until further notice.

Tyne & Wear, A19 Newcastle area. Roadworks at Killingworth.

West Yorks, M1 J47. Major long-term roadworks until Sept 15.

North Yorks, A19 Thornaby-on-Roe. Roadworks.

City of Glasgow, M8 J25. Clyde Tunnel A739 Cardonald Interchange has narrow lanes both ways due to roadworks until Aug 30.

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Greenpeace ordered to stop disruption

Clare Garner

Greenpeace was last night served with an injunction preventing any further disruption of BP's drilling in Atlantic oil fields off the west coast of Scotland.

Following the decision by the Court of Sessions in Edinburgh, BP offered to suspend its action for £1.4m damages provided the environmental campaigning organisation and its senior campaigners observed the injunction.

"BP's principal concern is

not the recovery of damages," the company said, "rather, it is to ensure that its lawful operations are not interfered with and that safety is not compromised. BP has never questioned Greenpeace's right to campaign on climate change issues. But we do object to their employing unlawful tactics."

Greenpeace responded by agreeing to abide by the interdict, but vowed to continue opposing new oil exploration in the Foinaven field and elsewhere. "BP is one of the richest oil

companies in the world and is using its resources to stifle free and open discussion about environmental dangers that will affect us all," said Chris Rose, Greenpeace's acting executive director.

BP is suing Greenpeace for £1.4m in damages for losses during the group's week-long occupation of the Stena Dee oil installation which ended on Sunday. It hopes to have the first of its new fields at Foinaven on stream and producing up to 100,000 barrels of oil a day by the end of the year.

On Monday, a Greenpeace bank account containing £160,000 was frozen by the court and environmentalists claim the legal action could lead to bankruptcy and threaten the pressure group's survival.

John Sauven, a Greenpeace campaign director, accused BP of bullying tactics. "Their profits amount to billions. It's a hugely profitable organisation. By comparison ours is tiny." Mr Sauven described BP's seizure of assets as "insidious", adding: "We have skirmishes in

court all the time but we've never experienced anything like this before."

He believed that BP's legal action against Greenpeace would backfire. It could only suggest that the oil company was extremely concerned about Greenpeace's plans to take on the Government and 21 oil companies, including BP, at the High Court in London next month in an attempt to have the oil exploration licences for the Atlantic frontier declared unlawful.

"One can only conclude that they are worried by the success of what Greenpeace is doing," said Mr Sauven. "They obviously thought they could go to the courts behind our backs and that would be the end of it ... What are they going to achieve by this? All they are doing is getting a lot of bad publicity."

Indeed, various political parties spoke out last night against BP's behaviour. The Liberal Democrats accused BP of "massive overreacting". Nick Harvey, the MP for

Devon North, said it was "another example of a major multinational company using its massive legal muscle to crush legitimate opposition."

Instead of putting all their energy into attacking Greenpeace, they should be putting their energy into developing solar power which will help to provide a solution to the challenge of climate change."

The Green Party said it had already called for an international boycott of BP products, particularly petrol stations.

Niki Korvelyessy, speaker of the European Federation of Green Parties, said that groups in 70 countries would take part in the boycott.

She added: "Oil companies are determined to drain the planet of its last drop of oil, so we can burn it in the atmosphere, resulting in catastrophic change."

"It will be companies like BP who will be on the receiving end of demands for compensation in the future, but the amounts will run into trillions."

Ashes to ashes, and dust to fish food...

Jojo Moyes

A dedicated angler from Somerset has changed his will so that after his death he can throw his favourite fish for a lifetime's pleasure - by becoming bait.

Pete Hodge, from Bridgwater in Somerset, has asked that his ashes be mixed with 50 balls of groundbait (finely minced crumbs) and then catapulted into the River Huotspill.

Like all devotees of their sport, Mr Hodge has very particular views on the specifics of his request. He can't be mixed with just any old crumb - he has to be mixed with the commercially sold "Sensas 3000".

"And I must be finely sieved," the hairdresser told *Angler's Mail* magazine. "That bait will attract my favourite fish - bream. That actual mix is a favourite of theirs ... it stimulates them."

Mr Hodge, who is known locally as "the Groundbait King" ("wherever I go I put groundbait in"), has other specifications: he has to be lobbed, not merely gently dropped, from Woolavington Bridge.

"I've got several friends

who I'm sure would be willing to chuck me in, but you've got to put me in with a catapult. That's my style," he said.

Fifty balls of groundbait, he admitted yesterday, is a lot of balls. The most one would usually put in at any one time is six, so that part of the river is likely to attract veritable shoals of fish.

Mr Hodge acknowledged that if other anglers were to discover where his bait balls were going to be placed, they may well come and fish in that stretch. But he says he has no concerns that one of his friends - or even his wife - might end up eating him.

"No one eats bream. Eventually the fish will die, or they'll get eaten by eels or birds," he said. "Somebody should be able to catch them. For the rest of time I'll be swimming up and down that river."

His wife, he says, is perfectly happy with the arrangement.

In the meantime, the bream can look forward to a veritable feast. "They may have a bit of a wait yet," said Mr Hodge, who is aged 51. "But you never know, do you?"



Baited death: Keen angler Pete Hodge - the Groundbait King - has requested his ashes are made into fish food

Photograph: Rob Stratton

Spacewalk may not solve Mir's problems

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

A dangerous spacewalk to restore full power on board the *Mir* space station could go ahead tomorrow, after the three astronauts on board managed to restart a malfunctioning computer that had left them in a tumbling orbit.

But the problem prompted the Russian mission controller, Victor Blagov, to comment: "We really have to decide soon whether we need safety or money-saving."

Mir had been in a chaotic orbit for almost 24 hours after a computer system crashed on

Monday while the crew were trying to dock with a cargo ship. Yesterday the three men - two Russians and a British-American, Michael Foale - restarted the 11-year-old system, meaning that the space station can be reoriented so that its solar panels will catch the sun.

When the computer failed, the station automatically switched off all but vital life support systems.

Mr Blagov said the cosmonauts might take a spacewalk to *Mir*'s holed and airtight *Spektr* module tomorrow, a day later than initially scheduled. "Once they have the computer running and solar panels oriented to the

sun, they can go to *Spektr*," he said.

Mir has been underpowered by at least 30 per cent since *Spektr* was holed in a collision with an uncrewed cargo ship on 25 June, during docking practice. It was the worst accident yet. The cosmonauts must enter the module to reconnect electric cables from *Spektr*'s solar panels to the main ship.

Mr Blagov also complained that a lack of cash was behind Monday's computer crash, as *Mir* equipment has to be used until it virtually falls apart. The faulty computer unit, which exchanges data between all peripheral system parts and the computer



An anxious moment in mission control yesterday

centre, had not been changed for almost 11 years, he added.

"This interface malfunctioned. Unfortunately it happened during a docking procedure. During a routine flight there would be no consequences," Mr Blagov said. Even so, *Mir*'s commander, Anatoly Solovoy, managed to complete a safe docking manually.

Murdered nurse's brother keeps clemency option open for Britons

Steve Boggan

The brother of a nurse allegedly murdered by two British colleagues in Saudi Arabia spoke yesterday of the power of life and death he will wield over the Britons if they are found guilty.

But, speaking in conciliatory tones for the first time, Frank Gilford said he had not ruled out a plea for clemency on the women's behalf.

"There is no foregone conclusion that we are going to say 'right, we want their heads chopped off'," Mr Gilford told Reuters news agency in a reference to the public beheading that could await Deborah Par-

ry, 38, and Lucille McLauchlan, 31, if they are convicted of killing Yvonne Gilford last year.

Mr Gilford and his mother, Muriel, 84, have the right to demand the death penalty under Saudi law. Until now, his stance has appeared to be firmly in favour of beheading, but yesterday his tone sounded softer.

"We have not ruled out the death penalty, but then again we have not ruled it in," he said from his home in Jamestown, north of Adelaide. "We have never demanded it definitely had to be the death penalty. We have not knocked back our option of exercising our rights [to grant] clemency."

"What we are looking at, is for the court to make a decision and then we can say right, we can look at it." Asked how he felt with the Saudi court's verdict expected soon, Mr Gilford said: "Not very comfortable. It is not a situation I would wish on my worst enemy, it is a position I do not feel any person should be put in."

His sister's body was discovered in her room at the King Fahd medical complex in Dhahran last December. She had been stabbed, beaten and suffocated.

Yesterday, Mr Gilford launched what appeared to be a legal move to outflank the British nurses' lawyers in an

Australian court. The women's representatives had argued that his mother was not competent to demand the death penalty - because she was suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

Mr Gilford applied to be made her guardian so that he could make her demand for her.

However, he said his motives were not designed to guarantee a death penalty. "My motivation is to look after my family unit. All this is doing is to pick on a poor old lady who is 84 and whose only crime is to be old and feeble and to have a daughter who was cruelly murdered."

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Bird leaves speed team with nothing to crow about



Photograph: David Rose

Road worthy: Colin Fallows, driving a jet-powered racing car, tries to break the British land speed at Elvington airfield, near York, yesterday

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

A wayward crew put paid to an attempt to break the British land speed record yesterday, when it crashed into the air intake of a jet-powered drag racing car travelling at 150mph. The mishap happened

at Elvington airfield, near York, when Colin Fallows was accelerating towards the target of 259 mph on the first run of the day in his specially adapted car, aiming to break the 17-year-old record.

The damage prevented the jet engine from working to capacity – but even so Mr Fallows, 47, aver-

aged 248.27mph over a quarter of a mile run during a later attempt yesterday.

"The accident meant we were running 100mph short of our target. It's one of those things with record breaking – one day it works and the next day it doesn't," said Mr Fallows, an engineer from

Hartwell in Northamptonshire.

"I'm not a big fan of wildlife at the moment, but we'll be back another day. We'll go back and have a considerable number of beers tonight and then find the spare parts, fix it and come back again." No date was determined for the next attempt.

The existing British record was set by Richard Noble, who is currently preparing to challenge his own world record of 633mph and break the speed of sound in a jet-powered machine during September or October at the Black Rock Desert, Nevada, in the United States.

Mr Fallows had hoped to break the record and reach an average speed of over 300mph on the quarter-mile run in his car, nicknamed Vampire, which is 8.8 metres long and powered by a Rolls-Royce jet engine taken from an RAF Red Arrows Gnat aircraft. On previous runs it has been

unofficially clocked at 266mph. To qualify for a record, the car must make two runs timed by independent officials over a quarter-mile stretch of road or runway; the official speed is then the average of the two. Mr Fallows had hoped to exceed 300 mph in his 16-year-old car.

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Girls in adult jails ruled unlawful

Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

Locking up young female offenders with adult women criminals was ruled unlawful yesterday by the High Court.

The decision is likely to cause the Prison Service significant disruption and expense and force them to find new places for female offenders aged under 21. The ruling is expected to affect up to 80 young female inmates who are currently in adult women jails.

Eight of the 14 women's prisons have specialist wings for young offenders, but they are full at present as the prison population continues to accelerate. There are currently 2,799 female prisoners in England and Wales, of which 382 are aged under 21.

Mr Justice Sedley and Mr Justice Astill yesterday ruled that the Home Office policy under which all young female offenders are sent automatically to one of five adult prisons for assessment and allocation to young offender units was unlawful. Young male criminals are usually sent to specialist institutions rather than adult jails.

The Home Office will now be forced to reconsider the policy. The move follows the case of a 16-year-old who spent 15 days in Risley Prison, Cheshire, sharing cells with adult prisoners, before being released on bail.

The judges were told that the girl, referred to as F, had now been found a place at Styl women's prison in Cheshire, which had facilities for juveniles, and was no longer threatened with return to Risley.

The girl was sentenced to eight months for robbery, assaulting a police officer, disorderly behaviour and other offences.

In a judicial review hearing, her counsel, Ian Wise, argued that the use of adult women jails for young offenders should be exercised only in individual cases and in exceptional circumstances, whereas the practice was applied to all juvenile girls.

Mr Wise said: "There are, of course, no young offender institutions specifically for females, only female prisons which have been designated as having a dual purpose for adult and young offenders."

The judges said they would give reasons for their decision to rule the practice unlawful at a later date, but added that in the meantime, the Home Office "may be able to consider what it can and should do to meet the legal situation as we hold it to be."

Robin Tam, for the Home Office, said the fact that all girls were sent initially to prison did not mean their cases were not being individually considered. The prison authorities needed to assess each case to make a rational decision on placement.

The case follows a recent report by the Chief Inspector of Prisons, Sir David Ramsbotham, in which he expressed concern about the mixing of girl offenders with adult female prisoners.

The Howard League for Penal Reform, which supported the case, said the practice is in breach of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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IRA inmates moved from special units

Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

The 13 most dangerous IRA prisoners held in Britain have been moved out of their top security units in the run-up to the Northern Ireland peace talks, it was revealed yesterday.

The men are to enjoy less restrictive regimes after having their security status downgraded. The move was condemned

by Unionists who accused the Government of being weak on terrorism. Sinn Féin gave the news a guarded welcome.

The men include the six terrorists jailed for 35 years each in July for attempting to bring chaos to the South-east by blowing up electricity sub-stations. This included senior IRA members Gerard Hoaratty, 38, and John Crawley, a 40-year-old former US Marine, who were

released from prison terms during the last ceasefire.

The move means that there will no longer be any IRA prisoners, either charged or convicted, held in the three Special Security Units at Belmarsh in south-east London, Whitemoor in Cambridgeshire and Full Sutton in York.

Instead the men have been placed in the high-security wings of the three jails plus pris-

ons at Frankland, near Durham, Long Lartin, Worcestershire, and Wakefield, West Yorkshire. The special unit at Full Sutton is now to be "mothballed".

The decision to downgrade their security category from exceptional risk Category A to high risk Category A follows information from MI5 and the police that the risk of escape had decreased, the Prison Service said yesterday. One other in-

mate, who has no terrorism links, has also been moved.

The men will now be allowed greater freedom to mix with other inmates and use general facilities and can have "open visits" with relatives in which they will be able to touch one another. All visitors to the secure units, which still hold about 20 inmates, are prevented from contact with prisoners by a glass screen. There are 27

IRA members in English jails.

Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, and Joyce Quin, the Prisons Minister, agreed to the decision to move the IRA men out of the security units. Coming four weeks before the start of talks on the Province's future at which Sinn Féin is expected to be represented for the first time, they are seen as a concession to nationalists who have long criticised the conditions in

which IRA members are kept.

John Taylor, the deputy leader of the Ulster Unionists, accused ministers of acting "recklessly" and of ignoring police advice in the face of a continuing terrorist threat. "It seems to me that the police on both sides of the border remain concerned that there will be a return to IRA violence," he said. Ian Paisley Jr, the Democratic Unionist Party's justice

spokesman, claimed the Government was preparing public opinion for an early release programme for terrorist prisoners.

"This status downgrade will... weaken the structure and control exercised over some of the most dangerous terrorist criminals in Europe," he said. Sinn Féin, meanwhile, said that it will continue to press for the transfer and release of all prisoners.

Auditor to name junket councillors

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

More than 40 councillors and council officers in Doncaster have received letters from the district auditor warning them they are to be named and criticised in a report into the junketing scandal at the council.

The letters have prompted Labour councillors to start paying £10 a week into a special legal fund to seek advice should the district auditor threaten them with surcharge or repayment of hospitality.

Most of the recipients of the letters are councillors and include virtually all the leading councillors on the Labour-dominated council purged from their committee positions after the allegations of unauthorised foreign trips and boozy lunches were first reported in *The Independent* earlier this year.

In addition, a few former councillors, including ex-leader Gordon Gallimore, and senior officers, including former chief executive Doug Hale, are known to have received letters relating to a trip to Germany.

Several councillors, including at least one Tory, have started repaying the cost of hospitality received in an effort to allay criticism but police sources have indicated this will not exempt them from prosecution should investigations reveal that a crime has been committed.

The district auditor first revealed in February his concerns

that trips to many parts of the world, including China, Poland, Germany and the United States may not have been properly sanctioned by the council.

There are two other inquiries into allegations of wrongdoing at the council. The police are focusing on allegations that some councillors were given favourable treatment while the council itself is also looking at mismanagement.

While the letters suggest that the recipients will be criticised in the report, the aim is to give them one last chance to explain their conduct. A council source said: "Many of the councillors are appalled about what they have been sent and are hoping they can meet the district auditor to discuss the allegations."

The district auditor has given the recipients until the end of the month to respond but as it is the holiday period, they will probably have a couple of weeks' grace.

The Labour group on Doncaster voted on Monday to request its 58 members contribute £10 per week out of their own pockets, up to a maximum of £100, to enable the group to seek legal advice collectively.

While most have agreed to pay the amount, several have refused. One refusenik told *The Independent*: "I've done nothing wrong, so I'm not paying. I don't see why they are getting joint legal advice, when each case is different depending on how many trips they went on."



Life-choice: Child members of the Bruderhof Anabaptist community demonstrated for the abolition of the death penalty outside the American Embassy in London yesterday. Other members of Bruderhof, which has communities in Kent and East Sussex, are today marching to SCI Greene, a death row prison in Pennsylvania. Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Police investigate death of actor who hanged on stage

Kim Sengupta

Police in Greece have launched an investigation into whether the hanging death of a young British actor playing Judas in the musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* was an accident or suicide.

More than 600 spectators, including young children, were left shocked and distressed when they saw the body of Anthony Wheeler, 26, dangling from a prop rope at the open-air show in the scene where Judas takes his own life.

Mr Wheeler had been working at the same show at the Sani Beach hotel in the Halkidiki peninsula for the past three years, and was experienced at his act. He was supposed to suspend himself from a scaffold on the stage and free himself when the lights went out. It has been reported that he had failed to take the normal precaution of attaching a safety harness which could have saved his life during the performance on Sunday.



Anthony Wheeler. Worked on the show for three years

Nikos Vassiliadis, a coroner at nearby Salonika, said: "We know the death was a result of strangulation by rope. It is either an accident or a suicide, but that is for the police to decide."

He added that tests were being carried out to ascertain whether there was any physical ailment which could have caused Mr Wheeler to forget to

attach the harness.

Andreas Birner, sales and marketing manager at Sani Beach, said that Mr Wheeler had a new girlfriend and did not appear to be depressed. He said: "Last year he was on his own, but this year he had a girlfriend. Her name is Nicole and she is German. Obviously she is depressed, and she has gone back to Germany."

The coroner's report has been delayed because of the police inquiry, but we hope it will be out soon.

Dimitris Hatzivannakis, manager of Sani Beach, said: "We don't know how it happened. He had worked for us for three years. You can imagine the pandemonium when it happened. There were people screaming and crying and the other actors were terribly shocked. He was a pleasant, hard-working person and popular with his colleagues."

As the audience, many in tears, were hurriedly cleared the show's director tried unsuccessfully

to resuscitate Mr Wheeler. A number of the guests, mostly from Britain and Germany, were taking part in the musical in minor roles.

Mr Wheeler, a single man, was a member of a company of around 25 performers who appeared at a number of hotels in the resort area. One hotel official said: "We have had telephone calls from England from people who had known him in the past. They are very upset to hear the news."

British Embassy officials in Athens have been in touch with Mr Wheeler's family, who live near Banbury in Oxfordshire. They are waiting for the return of his body, which would follow the presentation of the coroner's report. Charles Bird, head of the political section at the British Embassy in Athens, said: "We have extended our sympathy to the family of Mr Wheeler. We are in regular touch with the Greek officials. Officially we have been told that death is due to strangulation."

Country facing plague of cats

Two leading animal welfare charities yesterday urged people to neuter their pets to prevent the country being overrun by stray cats and dogs, writes Kate Watson-Smyth.

The Cats Protection League said the risk of a "plague" of cats, fuelled mainly by unwanted and abandoned kittens, was now so great that it had launched a nationwide neutering campaign to prevent the problem becoming an "epidemic".

A spokesman for the charity said there were at least 1 million unneutered cats in Britain and that figure could multiply to more than 7 million by the year 2010.

One single female cat, over five years, can be directly responsible for as many as 20,000 descendants.

Mike McCawley, chief executive of the League, said: "The public, especially so-called cat lovers, need further education

to understand that, by not neutering their cat, they are destroying its quality of life."

"It's truly amazing that people will allow their cats to reproduce constantly."

"Unneutered cats are also far more vulnerable to contagious and fatal diseases which spread more rapidly among those that have not been operated on. Not to neuter is sheer cruelty."

The warning came as a survey revealed that more stray

dogs than ever before are being taken in by local authorities.

In a MORI survey commissioned by the country's largest dog welfare charity, the National Canine Defence League, it was discovered that 106,000 stray dogs were rounded up between 1 April 1996 and 31 March 1997 - an increase of 13 per cent.

One in six of the UK's strays, about 17,000 dogs, were destroyed.

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Thursday 28 August

LISTINGS SUPPLEMENT (AGRICULTURE)

Sunday 31 August

LISTINGS SUPPLEMENT (LANGUAGES)

Wednesday 3 September

LISTINGS SUPPLEMENT (SCIENCE & ENGINEERING)

Sunday 7 September

LISTINGS SUPPLEMENT (HUMANITIES)

Wednesday 10 September

LISTINGS SUPPLEMENT (GENERAL)

Sunday 14 September

LISTINGS SUPPLEMENT (GENERAL)

THE INDEPENDENT

INDEPENDENT

news



In step: Members of the San Francisco Ballet at a warm-up class before rehearsal for yesterday's performance at the Edinburgh Playhouse. The dancers are performing several pieces throughout this week at the Edinburgh International Festival. Photograph: Gerald Lewis

Devolution: Disciplinary move dominates Scotland's big day as Welsh get cash promise

Row over MP's death eclipses 'yes' campaign

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

The campaign for a "yes-yes" vote in Scotland's referendum on devolution struggled to get off the ground yesterday amid the growing row over the death of the Paisley MP Gordon McMaster.

Both the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, and the Minister Without Portfolio, Peter Mandelson, were expected to visit Scotland later this week to give their backing to the initiative.

Labour is to launch its own "yes" campaign today, but yesterday's joint press conference with the Scottish National Party and the Liberal Democrats

was overshadowed by the announcement of disciplinary action against the MP for West Renfrewshire, Tommy Graham.

Donald Dewar, the Secretary of State for Scotland and leader of the Scottish Labour Party, appealed to journalists not to ignore the important issues surrounding the devolution vote on 11 September because of the events in Paisley.

"I think it is a serious matter that's been seriously addressed. When the party has something to say about it, it will say it on the merit of its findings," he said. "This press conference is not about that. I hope you will respect that."

Mr Dewar was speaking at a briefing organised by Scotland Forward – the first to bring together the country's three political parties.

He was joined by Alex Salmond, leader of the SNP, and Menzies Campbell, the Liberal Democrats' foreign affairs spokesman.

Mr Salmond, whose party joined Scotland Forward only after a closely-argued debate, said he believed there would be a great deal of interest in the campaign.

"A Scottish parliament wouldn't have had the poll tax," he said. "I suspect a Scottish

parliament wouldn't have had the Skye Bridge tolls or wasted money on HCI hospital."

"A lot of concentration has been given to undemocratic decisions taken by Westminster."

Later, an SNP spokesman tried to throw a positive light on the clash between the launch and the Paisley announcement, arguing that Labour's problems in Scotland made the case for a Scottish Parliament even more pressing.

"These problems are the problems of the status quo and of the first past the post voting system. We clearly need a new kind of politics in Scotland," the spokesman said.

The proposed voting system for the Parliament, under which 76 members would be elected through a first past the post system and a further 56 on a proportional basis from party lists, would not necessarily deliver Labour an absolute majority, he added.

Brian Monteith, co-ordinator of the Think Twice campaign against devolution, said: "We think the campaign is in a tail-spin. We think the stench coming from areas such as Paisley, Monklands, Glasgow and Govan is becoming overpowering."

Letters, page 13

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Quango cuts to cover cost of assembly

Tony Heath

The £20m it is expected to cost to run a Welsh Assembly would be more than met by cuts in the £826m spent annually by the principality's ubiquitous quangos, Ron Davies, the Secretary of State for Wales, said yesterday.

"This is the definitive blow that sidelines the 'no' campaign," Mr Davies told a cwm conference in Cardiff. "Even the Tories concede that devolution will not lead to the break-up of the United Kingdom and now it is clear that savings from quangos will at least equal the assembly's running costs."

Mr Davies promised that there would be no cuts to hospitals or schools as a result of running the assembly. He added: "As well as immediate savings, I shall be looking at efficiency savings from the whole of the quango state to help me meet my pledge to the Welsh people."

Among the 81 quangos in Wales, five big spenders will be axed initially: The Welsh Development Agency (annual budget £150m), the Development Board for Rural Wales (£20m) and the Land Authority for Wales (£27.5m) will be merged to form what Mr Davies described as an economic powerhouse.

Consultations are already in train between the three at board level to identify savings. At present, the chief executives of the three bodies all earn more than £70,000 a year. Paring down head offices – there are two in Cardiff and one in Newtown, Mid Wales – will produce further savings. The amal-

gamation inevitably means redundancies, and severance payments may constrain the initial impact of the change.

The Cardiff Bay Development Corporation – chaired by Sir Geoffrey Inkin, who unsuccessfully contested Ebbw Vale for the Tories at the 1979 election and now earns £34,000 a year for two-and-a-half days' work per week – and the Residual Body for Wales will be wound up before the assembly convenes. The Development



Ron Davies: Savings will pay for new administration

Corporation's annual expenditure tops £50m, with the residual body spending £900,000.

The assembly, which is due to begin sitting in 1999, will be empowered to abolish or restructure most of the remaining quangos, which range from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (annual budget £236m) to the little-known Place Names Advisory Committee, a minuscule body which consults infrequently, usually by telephone.

DAILY POEM

Auld Men At Dysart Cross

By William Hershaw

In fog of Forth, in morning frost or sun,
the auld men pass the time at Dysart Cross.
There's two I know – one gye and half-ways drunk,
the other crabbit, dour, shun as a door.
The daft one dances on the cobble stones
and talks to strangers whether folk or dogs.
Laughing at life, he hands the bairn ten pence.
The sour one has a sulcace and a stick
the gruffest nod, the most laconic 'aye',
he looks away, a sneer creased on his face.
Both hardened by how long they've weathered life
below the Knock, untouched by what is new;
the acid rain and ultra-violet sun –
these cannot harm them as they harm the young.

William Hershaw teaches English in Kirkcaldy and plays guitar and mandolin in a folk band. This poem comes from *The Cowdenbeath Man*, his first collection, published by Scottish Cultural Press (£4.95).

Cyprus victims 'were not drunk'

Ian Burroll

A British tourist who accuses five British soldiers of carrying out a vicious assault in a Cyprus holiday resort was yesterday involved in an angry slanging match with defence lawyers at their trial.

Sacha Wright, a 20-year-old waitress, was told she was not in a position to identify the alleged assailants, who left two of her friends bloodied and needing hospital treatment.

Ms Wright reacted with dismay as it was suggested that her group of four British tourists, two male and two female, had started the fight after a heavy drinking bout.

"Why are you questioning me about the drink? This is about my friend being attacked," she said. "We were not drunk. We were on holiday trying to enjoy ourselves."

The day before, her friend Claire Harbour, a 22-year-old nursery nurse, had been reduced to tears in the witness box, after two hours of questioning.

She said later: "It was horrible. I felt like I was in the dock rather than being a victim. What did I do to deserve this?"

Yesterday, during three hours of questioning Ms Wright, Mr Tasso Katsikides and fellow defence lawyer John Mylonas tried to prove that the prosecution witnesses could not be certain in identifying the soldiers.

Five riflemen, all from the 1st Battalion, King's Regiment, deny causing grievous bodily harm and actual bodily harm to Mr Bell, 23, Mr Ford, 23, and 22-year-old Miss Harbour outside a disco at Ayia Napa on 2 August.

Four of the soldiers – Roger

Bell, 26, Tim Carter, 27, Steven Wolstencroft 26, Steven Girvan 20 – are on trial at the current hearing.

The fifth, 20-year-old Stuart Spencer, is being tried separately.

Describing the attackers Miss Wright said: "Most had shaved heads, some had eyes which to me seemed scary and they were big men, especially Stuart Spencer."

Having to pick out the men at a police identity parade was an ordeal, she said, adding: "I was scared because I had to put my hand on the chest of a man who attacked my friend."

Although Miss Harbour had picked out Steve Wolstencroft as one of her attackers, Miss Wright said she could not place him at the scene of the attack.

"I don't recognise him," she said as she looked at Wolstencroft. "I can't say I'm sure he was there."

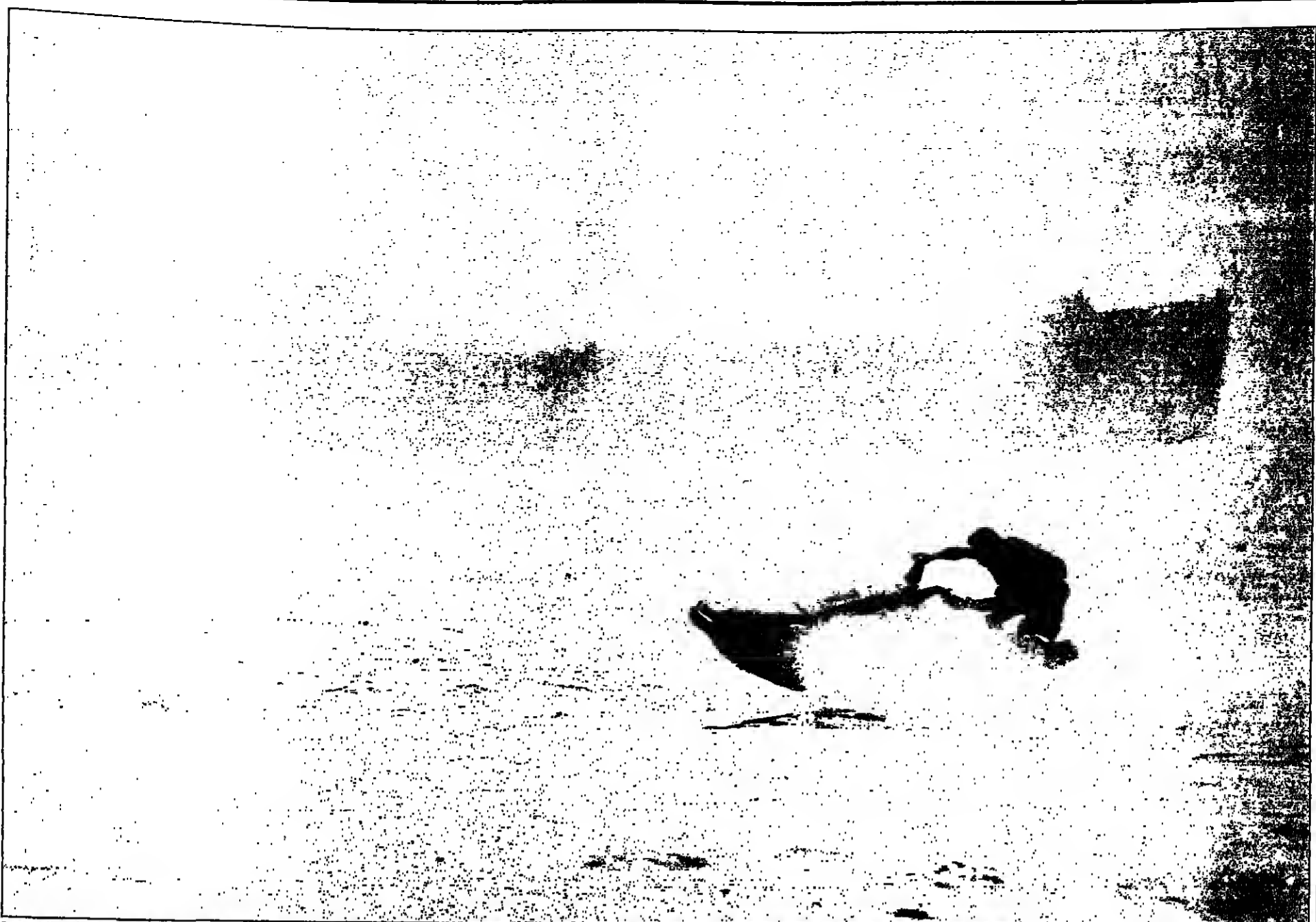
But, she said, she definitely saw soldier Stuart Spencer throwing punches at victim Barry Ford.

"I saw Spencer beating up my friend. I saw him going in," she told the court.

She strongly denied suggestions by Mr Katsikides that Ford and friend Shane Bell, both from London, started the fight with one soldier, telling the lawyer: "I don't know what you're talking about."

The judge, Michalis Christodoulou, then told Mr Katsikides: "You are taking far too much time and going into too much detail because under normal circumstances we would be hearing one witness every hour, not every four hours."

The trial was adjourned until today, when Mr Bell and Mr Ford are due to give evidence.



Making waves: A jet-ski riding between the piers at Brighton yesterday. Pressure is growing for tighter regulations after recent tragedies

Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

Deaths propel jet-skis into safety row

Steve Boggan

Calls for a ban on dangerous jet-ski riders are growing following a number of tragedies at home and abroad, the latest of which resulted in the death of a 17-year-old girl.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) yesterday added its voice to the demands for compulsory training after disturbing reports of dangerous driving – including an incident in which one jet-ski rider rode his machine underneath a catamaran ferry.

Last week, Faye Grundy became the latest victim of a jet-ski accident when she and her uncle, Tony Gee, 36, collided with a speedboat on Queenford lake in Berinsfield, Oxfordshire. There is no suggestion that Mr Gee was at fault, but experts are concerned that, like him, anyone can hire 50mph machines with only the most basic instruction.

"We would like to see some sort of national accreditation scheme so that people are

trained before using these machines," said Richard Tibbatt, a spokesman for RoSPA. "At the very least, we believe people should be taken out personally by an instructor, given tuition and then assessed for their competence and attitude, so that they won't go on the water and be foolhardy."

RoSPA wants to encourage more local authorities to introduce by-laws governing speed limits on the water and it wants those limits rigorously enforced. "There should be very stiff fines for offenders," said Mr Tibbatt.

The number of jet-ski accidents has increased in line with the popularity of the sport – there are an estimated 10,000 owners in Britain. Last August, Corporal Sandy McCauley, 26, died after being hit by a freak wave which flipped his machine on top of him during a holiday

in Florida; two months later, Paul Byram, 24, was killed in a collision with a motor boat on Pickmere lake in Cheshire.

The last time voices were raised over tighter regulations was in 1994 when Philippa Baker, 21, and Paul Grundy, 28, from Manchester, were killed when they collided with other holidaymakers on a jet-ski while on holiday in Turkey.

The same rules governing the hire of jet-skis in Turkey applied at British holiday resorts – very few – but the Government took no action.

Responsible jet-skiers and importers have tried to keep the rogue element out of the sport and last year they introduced their own certificate of competence in association with the British Marine Industry Federation.

Mark Rowley, whose company Sowester is one of the biggest importers in the country, encourages all his customers to study for the certificate. "They learn about safety and maintenance and riding skills," he said. "We think the sport can

be enjoyed safely if you have the machines unless they pass a 20-point test. Local youngsters who regularly use boats and jet-skis must attend an eight-hour course on safety before being allowed on the water."

So far, there is no national legislation covering safety of jet-skis on Britain's waterways.

Instead, individual resorts and local authorities have introduced ad-hoc, irregular, by-laws. Some, like Blackpool and Bournemouth, have introduced speed limits, while others, like Newquay, have banned them on the grounds of noise pollution.

After she campaigned for controls on jet-skis, the state of Florida introduced laws banning under-21s on holiday from hir-

ing the machines unless they pass a 20-point test. Local youngsters who regularly use boats and jet-skis must attend an eight-hour course on safety before being allowed on the water."

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Ducking costs a £100 fine

A power boat owner was given the maximum speeding fine yesterday – for giving six ducks a soaking.

Sivananva Vincent, a 30-year-old artist, was booked by British Waterways officials after a wave from his craft knocked the sunbathing ducks off a canal bank. Nottingham magistrates fined him the maximum £100 for speeding on the Beeston Canal near the city.

The magistrates were told that the powerboat was travelling at 20mph – five times over the limit. Bob Oates, for the prosecution, said one witness described it as the worst case of speeding he had seen on the canal. Tax workers in a nearby office reported Vincent after they saw the ducks swept into the water.

Vincent, of Attenborough, Nottinghamshire, was also fined £250 for not possessing a pleasure boat licence and ordered to pay £340 costs.

Elderly to be sent home as hospitals prepare for winter

Jeremy Laurence
Health Editor

Health ministers will order urgent action to clear hospital beds blocked by the elderly and make way for emergency cases this winter, it emerged yesterday.

Thousands of old people are occupying hospital beds even though they no longer need clinical care and would be better off looked after at home. But fail-lured by health and social services managers to work together are preventing them being moved, leading to longer waiting lists and increased pressure

on hospitals. Ministers have ordered officials to prepare the NHS to cope with winter pressures. They are determined to avoid the situation of patients queuing on trolleys and being turned away from hospitals because beds are full.

Evidence of the blocked beds is being gathered by Alan Langlands, chief executive of the NHS, who is touring the country with Sir Herbert Laming, chief inspector of social services. They have found that neighbouring health authorities with similar hospital provision and demographic profiles have very different experience of the

problem. A health department spokesman said: "Three years ago Birmingham had awful problems getting patients into hospital in winter."

"Then health and social services managers got together and last year, although they were under the same pressures as everyone else, it was not a problem. There are similar examples elsewhere."

The spokesman said experience showed that collaboration between social services and health authorities "demonstrably works".

Mr Langlands and Sir Herbert will submit a report on their findings to Paul Boateng, the health minister, at the end of their tour and a circular will be issued next month advising health authorities on the action they should take. Where problems cannot be sorted out, Frank Dobson, the health secretary, has said he will personally intervene.

Mr Dobson has said in recent speeches that hospitals are dangerous places for patients to be, because of the risk of infection,

and that most elderly people would rather recuperate at home. Figures to be published today are expected to show a record 13 per cent increase in hospital waiting lists, the biggest single annual rise since the NHS began in 1948. The latest rise of 136,000 patients will take the total to 1.18 million. Ministers privately admit that Labour's manifesto pledge to cut waiting lists will not be realised for several years.

Dr Evan Harris, liberal democrat health spokesman, accused the government of trying to shed responsibility for its inadequate spending plans.

"To pin the blame on social services, the health secretary has invented a macabre Christmas game for the winter months – 'pass the patient'."

Mr Harris added: "Health professionals are aware that some elderly patients are staying in hospital too long, which is bad for them and not cost effective. But this is not a large-scale problem when compared to the beds crisis the NHS will be facing this winter."

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international

Peace-keepers walk the thin blue line



Robert Fisk
joins a
Norwegian
UN patrol in
Bourhoz,
southern
Lebanon



"Martini please, Bob - shaken, not stirred." Wicked laughter comes from the Norwegian rifle squad's 1st platoon. Second Lieutenant Vidar "Sims" Simensen, lazing in his deck chair in the morning sunshine on the mortar platform, looks uncharacteristically like the young Sean Connery - and *The Independent's* man in southern Lebanon clearly qualifies as a mere honorary private. Only cola, lemon juice and milk is stored in the platoon fridge at United Nations Observation Post 4-27; but Elias Khoury, the local Maronite grocer, runs a makeshift restaurant up the road. The platoon has a two-way phone link to his "Hard Rock Cafe" so that pizzas can be delivered door-to-door. Tough life, I'm thinking, these UN guys have.

But then there's the little matter of the gun position on the hill above - De Facto Forces Position N329 on the UN maps - which just happens to be the most attacked Israeli compound in the Norwegian battalion's UN area, overrun last year by 70 Hizbollah fighters who crept up the cliffs of the Litani river valley and stormed into the artillery battery under mortar and rocket fire. Last time the guerrillas took a shot at N329,

one of their Katyushas shrieked over Sims and his men and exploded in a nearby field. The Norwegians prefer mortars. "The Israelis and the armed elements [Hizbollah] are very good at firing mortars," Sims says. "We're happy about that - because it means they don't hit us."

Through the "bino" on top of 1st Platoon's observation tower, I can see a T-54 tank standing beneath an earth revetment. And across the valley to the east, four 155mm gun barrels - pale grey in the morning heat - huddle from another fortress of concrete and earth. Israel's fruitless, hopeless war against the Hizbollah - who have been struggling against the 2,000-strong Israeli occupation force and its South Lebanon Army militia allies here for 13 years - is set amid breath-taking scenery of parched wadis and mountain ridges, of gentle olive groves and wind-thrashed cliffs above the Litani river.

Sims calls a platoon briefing. I will be put on the day march before being allowed on a night patrol above the Hizbollah's infiltration paths. The men sip juice as Sims uses a coloured marker to draw a map on the back of a metal sheet. Roger



On alert: Keeping watch (left) and patrolling the UN zone have limited success in protecting villagers from both Hizbollah and Israel's secret police Photographs: Robert Fisk

Nikolaissen, at 33 the oldest in the platoon, sports a stunning tattoo of a naked blonde on his right arm, a relic of his days as a merchant seaman which bestowed upon him marriage and divorce and the maintenance of two children. Gunnar Schanke, bespectacled, an ex-security guard from Stavanger, has a crew-cut so short the platoon say his head is their emergency heli-pad. Morton Haagenstad, a 23-year-old car mechanic from Trondheim, is waiting for his 36-year-old girlfriend to arrive on holiday in Beirut with her two children.

"We'll walk to Fort Noram and across the trail down the Blue Line, then through Bourhoz," the platoon commander says. The old South African police truck - sold to the UN and nicknamed Adolf because of its vicious associations with apartheid - takes us to a

hillside of thorny bushes and grey boulders, a few of which have been splashed with pale blue paint. "You walk between these stones because we've cleared the path of mines," Sims says with Bond-like finality. "Outside the stones, you can go up in smoke." The thorns dig into the fabric of my army boots and tear at my trousers. The sun burns into our flak jackets until dark stains move across our shirts. I watch the blue line with the dedication of a rat.

Netanyahu warns over rocket attacks

Jerusalem, (Reuters) - Pro-Iranian Hizbollah fighters in Lebanon rained scores of Katyusha rockets on northern Israel yesterday prompting a threat from Benjamin Netanyahu of a tough Israeli response. "If there is no quiet on the Israeli

"They say when the Hizbollah bodies are found, that they've all been wired up," Sims is muttering ahead of me. "They want to take their enemies with them after death. So motto number one: Never touch a dead Hizbollah."

The powerful, vital folk-lore of guerrilla warfare comes in hits and pieces as we pat the insects off our clothes.

"They use fake rocks as bombs now. We've found half a mobile phone in one of them

- both sides use the same method. You set the thing up, take position and dial the number - BANG!" Walking slowly past a field of unexploded cluster bombs, I remember the Hamas bomber in Gaza who was assassinated by the Israelis. He picked up his mobile phone when it rang - and it blew most of his head off.

Far below us, I catch glimpses of pale green pools shaded by fir trees as the Litani froths through the gorge. We pad through the long grass to a palisade of sandbags smothered in cement, perched on a precipice of rock.

All around us on the mountain-tops are more grey forts, all manned by the Israelis or their militia allies, all waiting for an attack. More than 75 per cent of the Israeli stockades are built underground. Their artillery is fired automatically by

their troglodyte defenders. Only we live on the surface of the earth, watching the insect-swarmed trails.

Last year, a Norwegian night patrol was fired on by an Israeli tank just round the corner of the gorge. One of the Norwegians was hit by a fleshette shell - an artillery round containing 8,000 steel-tipped darts - and fell almost 100 feet down the mountain-side where he lay, firing 20 bullets into the air from his rifle to show his comrades he was still alive. By the time they reached him, he had bled to death.

Sims has not forgotten the incident. The heat is suffocating but he practises for an ambush, kneeling to fire across the Litani then running as Nikolaissen and Haagenstad and Schanke fire their rifles at the same distant rock, the bullets cracking over the gorge and re-

echoing down the valley. For 19 years, I reflect, the Norwegians have been patrolling this terrain and guarding their acres of UN turf for most of the time deep within Israel's occupation zone. And to what end? They have prevented the Israelis building artillery batteries inside the UN zone - but the Israelis have littered the valleys around it with their gun pits. They have, sometimes, forced the Hizbollah to turn back. They have given some measure of protection to the Christian and Druze villagers who fear both Hizbollah's brutal intrusions and the equally brutal attentions of Israel's Shin Bet secret police.

But of course, they have not stopped the war. And as if to prove it, Sims turns to me and says: "You'll come with us on the night patrol - that's when it's serious."

Teamsters win deal over part-time jobs

Mary Dejevsky
Washington

A two-week strike at the transport company, United Parcel Service, that was widely seen as a barometer of industrial relations in the United States, was resolved in the early hours of yesterday morning with a tentative agreement on a new five-year contract between the company and the Teamsters Union. The agreement followed 80 hours of talks in a Washington hotel, moderated by the Labour Secretary, Alexis Herman.

Although the agreement has still to be voted on by union members, there seemed little doubt that it would be accepted and the familiar brown vans

belonging to the company described as "corporate America's mail service" were already reappearing on the streets yesterday. News of the deal had been greeted with jubilation on the picket lines overnight, where restlessness was starting to set in over the length of the strike and the meagreness of union strike pay - \$55 (£34) a week.

Details of the agreement, as presented separately by the Teamsters' leader, Ron Carey, and UPS officials, indicated that the union had achieved many of its objectives, notably on the subject of part-time working. The number of full-time jobs will be increased by 10,000 over the five-year period, pay for part-timers will be pro-



Strike over: A UPS worker in Oakland cheers at the news

gressively increased to two-thirds that of full-time employees, and the use of subcontractors will be reduced.

The union also retains control of its members' pension fund. UPS had wanted to set up a new fund, jointly administered by itself and the union.

For the public, however, the key issue of the strike was the use and treatment of part-time workers. The union's case rested on complaints that UPS paid part-timers half the full-timers' hourly rate and that the company cut costs by recruiting part-timers in preference to full-timers, not promoting part-timers into full-time positions and increasing its use of subcontractors. Opinion polls showed a clear majority of Americans siding with the workers - an unusual development in a country where unions and

strikes have generally not enjoyed widespread sympathy.

The chairman of UPS, James Kelly, very much on the defensive, said yesterday that the settlement remained "within the financial parameters set before the negotiations". He warned, however, that the strike had "hurt us a great deal" and that some customers would not be back. This would cost jobs - how many would he determined in coming weeks. One UPS official forecast that as many as 15,000 could be laid off.

Mr Kelly also stressed that the pay increase and rise in full-time jobs were conditional on UPS increasing turnover. Before the strike, UPS had 80 per cent of the US market for

transporting packages, but its two-week absence encouraged many newer, smaller companies to expand their services. The US Mail service also moved to pick up UPS business.

The strike was the biggest and longest in the United States in two decades and was carefully monitored for signs that the labour movement, which has been in decline since the 1960s, could be on the verge of a revival. The solidarity of the strike and the nature of the dispute - resentment on the part of workers that their pay and security seemed to be decreasing, while employers' profits had risen to record levels - meant that it was seen as a sign of the times rather than just another labour dispute.

significant shorts

Capitalists fund N Korea's nuclear reactors

A consortium of capitalist nations broke ground yesterday for a landmark nuclear project in Communist North Korea that Washington and Seoul have said is key to preserving peace on the peninsula. Puffs of pink, green, orange and yellow smoke belched from a hillside in the north-eastern town of Kumho as officials of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation (KEDO) triggered a "symbolic blast".

KEDO, led by the US, South Korea and Japan, is responsible for financing two 1,000MW light-water reactors at an estimated cost of \$4.5-\$5bn (£2.8-3bn). The reactors are to be delivered in return for Pyongyang's 1994 promise to freeze and eventually dismantle its suspected atomic weapons programme. Reuters - Kumho

Banja Luka police chief arrested

Milan Sutlovic, the newly appointed police chief of Banja Luka, a man loyal to Bosnian Serb President Biljana Plavsic, was arrested by state security controlled by indicted war criminal Radovan Karadzic. Ms Plavsic has been locked in a power struggle with Karadzic loyalists. Reuters - Sarajevo

Peking jails son of party boss

China has sentenced the high-flying son of the disgraced former Peking Communist Party chief to 12 years in prison for corruption. Chen Xiaoteng, son of former Peking party boss and Politburo member Chen Xitong, was convicted of taking bribes and misusing public funds. Reuters - Peking

Mandela to host Sudan talks

President Nelson Mandela said he hoped to host direct talks between Sudan President Omar el-Bashir and rebel leader John Garang. Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni, who along with other east African leaders is involved in a regional initiative to end the 14-year civil war in Sudan, would also be present. Mr Mandela said. AP - Cape Town

African oil field discovery

The French company Elf Aquitaine announced the discovery of one of the biggest oil fields ever in Africa, the Dalia well off the coast of Angola, 150 miles north-west of the capital Luanda. It is believed to contain up to 3.5 billion barrels. Joanna Lee - Paris

Kenya killings reach tourist site

Two people were killed on Kenya's coast yesterday and fire destroyed 300 curio stalls in a resort as a week of violence hit a tourist site for the first time. It was also the first time unrest reached as far as Malindi, 120km (75 miles) north of Mombasa, the centre of violence in which at least 37 people have been killed in a week. Reuters - Malindi

Dramatic stay of execution

A Saudi man pardoned his son's killer moments before he was to be executed in a public square. Hassan al-Zayab forgave Salem bin Mubarak, a Yemeni convicted of slaying his son Turki, just as an executioner was about to behead him. The kingdom has executed 80 people this year. AP - Riyadh

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Valujet crash blamed on oxygen shipment

Washington - The unauthorised transport of oxygen generators in the hold was given yesterday as the primary cause of the crash of Valujet flight 592 in the Florida Everglades last May, writes Mary Dejevsky.

The accident, which is remembered for the difficulties of the salvage operation in alligator-infested swamps, killed 110 people and prompted questions about the proliferation of small, cut-price airline companies in the wake of deregulation in the United States.

At a day-long meeting yesterday, the US transport safety watchdog, the National Transportation Safety Board, heard evidence from the specialists who conducted the official investigation into the crash. This is the last stage of the investigation, before the board presents its final report in six to eight weeks' time.

Although the inquiry had been expected to focus on shortcomings in Valujet's operating and maintenance standards, the emphasis yesterday rapidly shifted to the regulations set and enforced by the US Federal Aviation Authority. NTSB officials said, in particular, that they had advocated stricter pre-



Rescuers searching the Everglades for survivors of last May's crash in which 110 people died Photograph: Reuters

cautions against fire, including improved insulation of the particular cargo area of the Valujet DC-9 where the fire is believed to have originated, ever since a fire was found to have caused the fatal crash of a Saudi airliner in 1980.

They said their call had been renewed in 1988 after a non-fatal American Airlines crash, but that the FAA had turned down the recommendation "on cost-benefit grounds". Other investigators questioned FAA regulations that allow planes to operate without the cabin-cock-

pit intercom working (a cabin steward may have allowed smoke into the Valujet cockpit), and stipulate a flight crew of two, rather than three. This, they said, placed a greater burden on the chief steward - whose only contribution in this case was to shout "Fire, fire!"

Ever since it was suggested that illegally stowed oxygen generators could have caused the Everglades crash, Valujet has insisted that it was unaware of the cargo and blames the loading company for faulty labelling.

150 من الامم

Malaria defies new drugs to make lethal comeback

Jeremy Laurance
Health Editor

Malaria, one of the world's biggest killers, is defying new treatments and spreading rapidly, threatening to create a major world-wide public health disaster, scientists say.

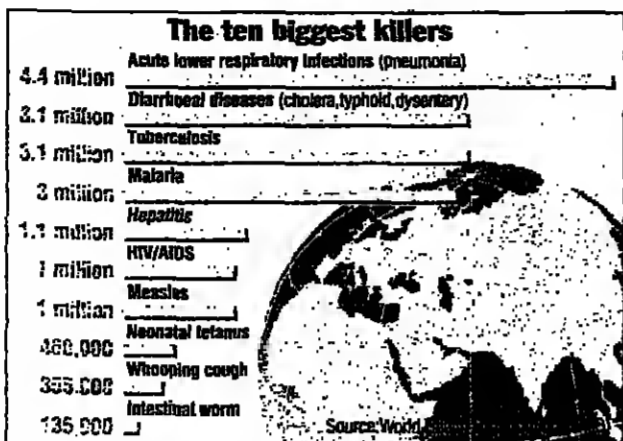
Exactly 100 years since Sir Ronald Ross discovered that mosquitoes were responsible for carrying the deadly parasite, mankind is losing the battle against the disease.

Today, 650 scientists and public health officials from around the world are marking the anniversary in Hyderabad, India, with a meeting to consider a global strategy to curb the rise in cases, numbers of which are estimated to have quadrupled in the past five years.

Experts fear that unless action is taken to control the disease, the growth of drug resistance, global migration of the disease and climatic changes will threaten new areas with malarial infection and further increase the toll of death and disease.

Malaria strikes 500 million people a year, causing almost 3 million deaths, most among children. Despite the scientific and medical advances of recent decades, it kills more people today than in the Sixties.

Brian Greenwood, professor of communicable diseases at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, said: "Malaria is the most prevalent and neglected parasitic infection.



tion. An estimated 40 per cent of the world's population is at risk."

The World Health Organisation (WHO) predicts that an extra 81 million people a year will be infected by the end of the century, a 16 per cent rise in three years.

In India, the malaria eradication programme of the Fifties and Sixties reduced infections from 75 million to 100,000 a year, and deaths from 800,000 to almost none. That trend has reversed over the past two decades and there have been four major epidemics since 1994. Last year there were almost 3 million cases and at least 3,000 deaths.

The Malaria Foundation, an international group of scientists set up in 1992, yesterday called for a new political commitment and for increased funding to combat the disease.

Dr Dan Colley, director of the division of parasitic diseases at the Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia, said: "There is an urgent need for concerted action to control malaria now, before drug and insecticide resistance, population shifts and potential climatic changes combine to further expand this major world-wide public health disaster."

Thirty years ago malaria had been eradicated, or dramatically reduced, in 37 countries as a result of the WHO insecticide spraying programme, but many of the programmes have since been abandoned, partly because of cost and partly because of declining motivation in the face of an apparently declining threat.

Drug resistance has increased rapidly as a result of widespread use of malaria treatments in an unregulated and uncontrolled way. Most tropical

countries rely on chloroquine because it is cheap but the drug is increasingly ineffective. In some areas resistance has also developed to the newer drug mefloquine (Lariam) which many people are reluctant to take because of side effects such as dizziness.

Mefloquine is none the less recommended for Western tourists visiting areas where the *plasmodium falciparum* species of parasite, the major cause of malaria deaths, is endemic.

The foundation claims that too little is spent on malaria research compared with other diseases such as AIDS and asthma that cause fewer deaths. It says global research spending on AIDS is \$3,274 (£2,040) per death compared with \$789 per asthma death and \$65 per malaria death.

The Wellcome Trust has announced a three-year project to work out the full genetic sequence of the malaria parasite, to identify features that may be susceptible to attack by drugs.

Malaria was common in England until the last century but had disappeared by 1930. Medical historians claim that in addition to better housing and wider availability of drugs, the introduction of the turnip as a winter feed for cattle may have had an unexpected benefit. The turnip meant that more animals could be kept alive through the winter instead of being slaughtered, and mosquitoes preferred to bite cows rather than human beings.



Uphill battle: Children climbing a hay-bale mountain near Leipzig in Germany

Photograph: Reuters

When there aren't enough hours in the day: Thailand's speedy epidemic

Matthew Chance
Bangkok

Peering down from the cabin of his eight-ton lorry, red-eyed and lean, Khun Cham Be steadies his hands enough to light another menthol cigarette. Ahead is another long night on the road carrying timber across Thailand, an unbearable ordeal of endurance, he says, were it not for his tablets of *yaa baa*, amphetamine.

"The longer I can stay awake, the longer I can drive, and the more I can earn," he says. "I don't think I could do this job without my tablets." For hundreds of thousands of other low-paid, overworked Thais, amphetamines are seen as an easy way to boost personal earning power in a nation obsessed with materialism.

Known as *yaa baa* (mad medicine), amphetamine tablets are bought by the Thai poor as a means, not of recreation as in Europe and America, but of boosting energy to work harder and longer. Typically, it is taxi drivers, long-distance truckers, and factory workers, all paid by the hour, who are dependent on *yaa baa*. The more they swallow, the more they earn.

"There is a definite link in this part of Asia between amphetamine use and economic development," says Richard Dickens of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme in Bangkok.

"We have watched amphetamines and other stimulants surge in popularity in virtually all of the dynamic 'tiger' economies of east Asia, starting with Japan after the Second World War, through South Korea a decade ago," he added. Thailand's problem with stimulant abuse, now reaching epidemic proportions, according to the UN, first came to the notice



of the authorities in the early 1990s: at the height, in other words, of the country's boom years.

"This is a regional problem. We are increasingly concerned about the spread of amphetamines into China as well. With the Chinese economy now expanding so rapidly, and the pressure that is putting on working Chinese, there is potential for explosive growth," warns Mr Dickens. That possibility has not escaped the region's drug producers, aware that in the long term, amphetamine production offers more secure, and even bigger profits than the area's traditional drug product - opium.

Deep in the jungles of the notorious Golden Triangle region of Thailand, Burma and Laos, new factory-laboratories are springing up, mass-producing amphetamines to meet a seemingly insatiable demand.

Anti-narcotics police say the producers are headed by the same secretive and heavily-armed drug barons who monopolise opium growing and heroin production in the area.

Their intelligence reports even suggest a complete change of production in some areas from opium to amphetamines.

In many ways, manufacturing amphetamine tablets is much easier than heroin production, which requires large quantities of raw opium.

Amphetamine tablets can be produced in their millions, with relatively small amounts of either synthetic or naturally occurring ingredients mixed in small, highly-mobile laboratories less vulnerable to detection than the vast poppy fields that

encumber the opium producer.

The other crucial factor is that, whereas heroin's overseas market requires complex international trafficking networks, stimulants like *yaa baa* are sold and consumed by locals, or, at least, by people a short truck or boat ride away. That, say police, means producers get an almost instant profit on their drugs.

Tablets which cost as little as 6p to manufacture can fetch up to £3 on the streets of Bangkok.

At night, "long-tailed" speedboats thunder along the city's klongs, a complex network of

Rapid appeal: Amphetamines have long been used by travellers in Thailand but now their use has spread throughout Thai society
Photograph: Reuters

dark, narrow and polluted canals which connect disparate city districts, delivering literally boat-loads of tablets to freelance dealers who each buy small amounts to sell at taxi ranks, petrol stations, even Buddhist temples.

But there is also a new and growing market for *yaa baa*: schoolchildren. Under increasing pressure to perform at schools from parents and teachers, children as young as 10 are becoming dependent on the drug as a means of staying awake to study harder and longer. "It started as an experiment, to do what my friends were doing," says Chiraporn, a 15-year-old schoolgirl. Her three-year amphetamine habit was discovered by her father after she complained of anxiety attacks, nightmares and sickness. An investigation revealed that 40 per cent of her classmates were regular *yaa baa* users.

This rapid penetration of amphetamines into the respectable world of the Thai middle classes has jolted the authorities into tackling a drug traditionally confined to the country's impoverished.

Posters warning of the dangers of dependency have been stuck on walls and lamp posts, and police have been targeting peddlers. But despite more than 30,000 arrests last year, demand for *yaa baa* is growing. And the country once notorious for its number of heroin and opium addicts now has more than 300,000 amphetamine users, according to official figures - more than any other nation.

Navy helps Montserrat evacuation

Phil Davison
St Johns, Antigua

The Royal Navy will today help evacuate residents of the British colony of Montserrat after warnings that the next eruption of the Soufriere volcano could engulf the entire Caribbean island.

Despite the dangers, a few people yesterday opened their shops or bars - simple wooden shacks thrown up after the evacuation last year of the now-destroyed capital, Plymouth.

Islanders expressed increasing frustration over mixed signals from British officials as to whether London favoured a total evacuation, at least until the volcano settles down, or keeping people on the island to press ahead with development in the north.

Many were awaiting details of the voluntary repatriation package before deciding whether to stay or go.

George Foulkes, British Minister for International Development, warned at the weekend of the possibility of a cataclysmic eruption and for the first time said even the north was not safe.

Clive Mansfield, a spokesman for the British governor Frank Savage, then put out a statement saying: "The north is safe. There's no question of anyone being forced off the island."

Among those refusing to leave the danger zone yesterday were bar owners Raymond and Hilma Blake, still in their home in the village of Flemings, in direct line of sight of the volcano only two miles away. "We lost our bar in Plymouth. If we lose this, we have nothing," said Mrs Blake yesterday.

But with the remaining residents crammed into private homes, churches, tents or shelters in the rocky north, with few facilities, it appeared increasingly unfeasible they could remain there for long. Though

French opposition searches right and left for partners

Former RPR minister wants 'understanding' with Le Pen. Joanna Lee reports

Shaken and demoralised by the electoral defeat of 1 June, the French Right are struggling to come up with a new strategy that will put them back in the running for government.

The debate over the merging of the two main right-wing parties has been reopened, as is often the case in moments of crisis. The Gaullist mayor and MP for Valence, Patrick Le Lay, has suggested that a p-town should be used for the amalgamation of the neo-Gaullist Rassemblement pour la République (RPR) and the centre-right Union pour la

Democratique Française (UDF). His proposal has caused a flurry of debate within both parties, which has served to demonstrate more than ever the divisions within the ranks of the opposition. Five MPs, including the former Defence Minister, Charles Millon (UDF) have come out in support of the project. In an interview with *Le Figaro* last Saturday Mr Millon stated: "The opponents of this fusion can only find tactical or personal arguments to oppose it - if they don't like it, well, they should change parties, go and join the Socialists."

The spokesman for the UDF,

Pierre-André Wiltzer, believes that the possibility of closer union "merits an organised debate, open to all concerned", but that this does not necessarily mean a merger. Nicolas Sarkozy, the RPR spokesman, believes that priorities lie elsewhere: "It is not by joining two weak organisations that you create a strong one - first we must rejuvenate the RPR and reform its political plans."

In an interview in yesterday's *Le Figaro*, the general secretary of the UDF, Claude

Gossuén, explained: "Fusion would not solve internal problems and there are still essential differences between the parties on areas such as decentralisation and Europe."

The UDF favours decentralisation and is very pro-European, whereas the RPR is less enthusiastic about decentralisation, and although officially pro-European, does have reservations in this direction, particularly towards federalism. These are the main areas of contention between the two parties,

which are otherwise essentially fairly close. There is however a difference in the nature of the two parties which is likely to render amalgamation difficult. The RPR was founded by General De Gaulle in 1958 as the main right-wing party, and modernised and renamed by Jacques Chirac in 1976. The UDF is a union rather than a party, of all non-Gaullist right-wing parties, created to support the former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in 1978.

A darker, more desperate proposal is also floating around the offices of the opposition at the moment: that there should be co-operation with Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front. His party won 15 per cent of the votes in the first round of the recent general election, which had a catastrophic effect for the RPR and UDF.

A former RPR minister, Alain Peyrefitte, and former UDF MP Robert Pandraud have both asked for an "understanding" with the National

Front. Mr Gossuén has requested that his party stop "demonising the National Front" and indulge in "serene and constructive thought" with them.

This possibility has been rejected by the president of the RPR, Philippe Séguin, and a spokesman for the RPR said yesterday that any alliance with the National Front was "out of the question".

A spokesman for the National Front said that it seemed "unlikely for the moment because the Right prefer stupidly to lose elections rather than ally with the National Front".



Le Pen: Gaullists may seek ties with his National Front

BP. WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU AFRAID OF?

An open letter from Greenpeace following the freezing of our assets by the oil giant.

Greenpeace is an international campaigning organisation committed to defence of the environment and the acceleration of human progress. We campaign to persuade governments and industries to adopt cleaner, more efficient solutions that the world and the public urgently wants, focussing on the resolution of global environmental problems.

We believe that our campaign to prevent further development of the Atlantic Frontier oilfields in general, and the Foinaven field in particular, is justified.

None of these oil fields has been subject to proper environmental impact assessment. The potential impact on climate, on birds and on marine life, has not been properly assessed and the UK has only now, nine years late, introduced Draft Regulations to implement the EC Environmental Impact Assessment Directive to the UK Continental Shelf.

Foinaven is a field which has been developed on a "fast track" basis authorised by the Department of Trade and Industry without proper control or assessment.

The state of the North Sea illustrates the fate that awaits the Atlantic Frontier, stretching from west of Shetland to hundreds of miles west of Rockall, if the region is industrialised.

Since August 1996, Greenpeace has urged the UK Government and BP, the main operator of the Foinaven oil field, to desist from further development. This is not only on grounds of potential direct impacts for example from drilling muds and discharges, but because it is an expansion of fossil fuel reserves at a time when science shows that the climate cannot sustain the use of reserves that already exist, if the world is to stay within "ecological limits" of tolerable climate change.

On Monday, Greenpeace wrote to Mr John Browne, Chief Executive Officer of BP, pointing out that according to one of its own studies, if BP were to invest half its 1997 second-quarter profits, or half the monies it says have been invested in Foinaven to date, in a solar factory, then it would produce solar power panels at a cost which would make solar electricity cost-competitive against fossil fuel electricity, overnight.

Greenpeace believes it is wrong and entirely irresponsible for BP to invest in expanding oil reserves when it could be investing in the solution to climate change instead.

Greenpeace notes that John Browne, said in a speech on 19 May 1997 that the subject of the "global environment" was of the "utmost importance" and that "there is now an effective consensus among the world's leading scientists and serious and well informed people outside the scientific community that there is a discernible human influence on climate, and a link between the concentration of carbon dioxide and temperature".

Mr Browne added that: "The time to consider the policy dimensions of climate change is not when the link between greenhouse gases and climate change is conclusively proven... but when the possibility cannot be discounted and is taken seriously by the society of which we are part".

Greenpeace also believes it is wrong and entirely irresponsible for the UK Government to call for tougher controls on fossil fuel emissions at international conventions, while fuelling climate change by a policy of opening up more fossil fuel resources as reserves.

Greenpeace notes that fossil fuel reserves are expanding - for every one barrel of oil used since the "oil crisis", two have been "discovered" and added to reserves. Oil use is increasing. Carbon dioxide levels are increasing. Climate is warming globally at around 0.1-0.2°C per decade. Arctic and Antarctic ice, and mountain glaciers are melting. Diseases are spreading and are forecast to continue to spread, and forests are dying back as a result of the effects of warming. Severe storms and other extreme and life threatening weather events are increasing and forecast to do so by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Greenpeace has sent ships to the Antarctic and Arctic to document these events.

At the forthcoming "Climate Summit" in Japan, Greenpeace will again draw Government's attention to Objective Two of the Convention which calls on Governments to restrict climate change to levels which are not dangerous to natural or human systems and which allow them to "adapt naturally".

To meet such limits, it has been calculated that only one quarter of existing fossil fuel reserves may be utilised. To open up new reserves is, in these circumstances, wrong and foolish. The Foinaven field and the other parts of the so-called Atlantic Frontier were conceived prior to the realisation of climate change.

For these reasons, Greenpeace opposes the expansion of fossil fuel reserves by industrialised nations, and seeks instead to persuade governments and oil companies to immediately switch investment to solar power and other renewable energies.

BP is leading the world in the wrong direction by opening up fossil fuels that the climate cannot sustain. Indeed they would rather close down Greenpeace than change direction and invest in solar power.

Greenpeace appeals to the public for its support.

Yours faithfully



C I Rose

Deputy Executive Director
Greenpeace UK

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Mr. Martin Christopher Burton,
Solicitor, to be Chief Registrar in
Bankruptcy.

Mr. Justice Jacob, to be Chancery
Superioring Judge for Bristol, Cardiff
and Birmingham.

Judge Paul Collins, to be Director
of Studies at the Judicial Studies
Board.

Miss Ann Abraham, to be Legal
Services Ombudsman.

Mrs Valerie Evans, to be Co-Chair,
Women's National Commission.

Mr John Davis, to be President of the
Royal Anthropological Institute.

Changing of the Guard
The King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery
marches the Queen's Life Guard at Horse
Guards, 11am.

Changing of the Guard
The King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery
mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse
Guards, 11am.

Skirts go sky high

The 'new' mini is a very different animal from its Sixties cousin, writes Tamsin Blanchard. Photographs by Ben Elwes



John Galiano's saucy schoolgirl mini (above); Christian Dior - where's the skirt?



Clockwise from left: Vivienne Westwood - show us your suspenders; Clements Ribeiro - mini-kilt; Prada - demure bandeau skirt; Givenchy - mean in black patent leather



Hold on to your hem: this autumn, the micro-mini is back. You've heard that before, I know. But this time it really is. On the catwalks, clothes - for women at least - seem to be all but disappearing. As far as fashion designers are concerned, women are now so liberated, they don't need to wear clothes anymore, just a pair of high-heeled stilettos, a swathe of lace held on by a hairline strap, and a slick of red lipstick. Knickers are optional.

It's not surprising, first, so-called quality men's magazines, once interested in cars, watches and useless gadgets, become obsessed with scantily clad babes. No men's magazine cover is complete without one. Then, *Penthouse* relaunched and every fashion photographer in London wants to work for it. It's not porn, they say, it's hip. Meg Mathews, Noel Gallagher's wife, turns up at Number 10 bearing herself on board Dodi's yacht, strapless and as good as topless. The Nineties will be remembered as the decade of scanty lace shifts, "nude" clothes that you might as

well not be wearing, plunging necklines, and dresses pulled together with just a handful of safety pins. The erogenous zone has become more important than the fabric that reveals it. Little - or nothing - is left to the imagination. Fashion designers are obsessed with sheer fabrics, worn with or without underwear. As we approach the Millennium, the trends look set to get shorter and skimpier. "The leg" will be the new season's focus. The longer the better. Donna Karan has even written the foreword to a book called simply *Leg* to be published this September.

When Mary Quant slashed skirt lengths more than 30 years ago, London was swinging (sound familiar?), girls were "birds" (now we're babes) and the Union Flag was the greatest fashion accessory. (Liam Gallagher has just invested in three Union Flag cashmere jumpers by Brit designers Clements Ribeiro). Jacqueline Kennedy was cavorting on yachts with her rich playboy, in skirts that fell a few inches short of her knee. (Look out for Diana's take on the micro-mini this autumn, with or without her playboy's yacht, in a tabloid near you). Then, as now,

there was a youthquake. Fashion was not for those who could afford it, but for those who were young enough to get away with it. Is this 1967 or 1997? I wish someone would help me out of this time-war.

Of course, nothing in fashion is ever the same as it once was. This autumn's mini skirts are, in fashion speak, "new". In the Sixties, there was a certain innocence to the "mother of the mini." Mary Quant's invention. Then, it was about freedom, dancing, strappy tights and winklepicker shoes. In the Eighties, the short-skirted power suit was about the label, the short-skirted power suit was about the label, the short-skirted power suit was about the label.

Now, the mini is an altogether more sophisticated animal. Gone are the playful innocence and the status symbols, to be replaced by a knowing sexuality. This mini is about power games; designer tights and Gucci heels; flirtation as a means to an end, rather than simply as a means to getting a man.

On the right woman with the right legs and enough self-confidence, the micro-mini is the embodiment of sex and power, as seen on the catwalks of Givenchy, Gucci, and Chanel. It doesn't matter if they are skin tight, or flighty and pleaded,

as long as they are thigh-high. Not content to be knicker-grazing, some of them feature splits as well. At Clements Ribeiro, the mini is a kilt. Vivienne Westwood's are so short and saucy, they don't even cover your stocking tops. At Christian Dior, it is sugar almond coloured and worn with a nipped-in jacket, bobby socks and platform shoes worthy of Betty Grable, the star whose legs were famously insured for a million dollars and were shown off at every opportunity. And who could blame her?

In 1968, fashion commentator James Laver called the mini skirt "the final word in the emancipation of woman - in proving her economic dependence. Long, hampering skirts were fetters to keep a woman home." Thirty years on, I can't remember the last time I was fettered by a long skirt or, for that matter, a pair of trousers. I don't need a glorified belt of a skirt to walk, run, climb flights of stairs and earn a crust. Nor do I want to flash my knickers as I do so.

Mini skirts have in turn been reviled and celebrated by women's movements. We just don't seem

to be able to make up our minds as to whether they exploit the wearer, or the man the wearer is exploiting. And as for the parallels all too often drawn between skirt lengths and the economy, I'm sure Gordon Brown has more pressing matters on his mind than how his economic policies will make girls' skirts yo-yo. I hope so anyway. One thing is for sure however: if your legs measure anything less than 5ft from waist to stockings heel, don't even think about it. The most important difference between 1967 and 1997 is that women now have a choice. You will not be regarded as a frumpy old maid if your skirt doesn't skim cellulite-free thighs.

If you like to show you are abreast of the trends but your legs are not smooth and slender pins, take the post-feminist, post-post modern, post-backlash option as designed by the young genius, Hussein Chalayan. It's called the skirt-trouser, a pair of narrow pants with the shortest, crotch-skimming skirt attached across the hum, all-in-one. You can bend over all you like and whether you are wearing knickers or not, no one will be any the wiser.

After New Man, Morgan Man

Much in the same way that *Loaded* followed *Cosmopolitan* magazine, so the sleeky knee-high-booted, cleavage-thrusting Morgan Femme is the natural precursor to Morgan Homme, which is set to hit shops around the country in the next two weeks.

Morgan menswear was established in France in 1985 by the Abelsens family and has been sold on the British high street since 1992. Five years later, there are 33 Morgan shops around the country selling affordable, sexy clothes for girls and women who have a penchant for revealing inches of flesh. The menswear was a logical next step, and is hot on the heels of other popular high-street stores that have seen a gap in the menswear market: Jigsaw menswear launched only in 1993, whereas French Connection has been at it since 1976.

The clothes themselves are not necessarily for the boy version of the Morgan girl, although she would certainly look good on his arm. They are affordable, directional, practical and flashy - in the sense that a man looking for a good suit to wear for a night out would look at Morgan first, and go somewhere else for one to wear for work. Key pieces also include colourful, chunky knitwear which, according to Rachel Hall, a company

spokeswoman, "buyers couldn't get enough of", and subtle, low-shine shirts and car coats. The overall silhouette is slim, and fits well with the Morgan design ethos. The designer of Morgan menswear, Jocelyn Bismouth, has been consulting on the range, although it is being manufactured by a different company.

Morgan Homme, confusingly, will not be available within existing Morgan womenswear shops, as Hall explains: "We didn't just want to put it in with the women's stuff, partly as there was no room for it, and we didn't want the men to feel embarrassed trying things on." So instead the range is being tried out in stores such as Fenwick in Newcastle and Tunbridge Wells, Ailders and Suit Yourself stores around the country, and other independent shops. There will be one M Homme store opening in Glasgow in the first week of September, which will carry the biggest selection of stock, and more stores will be added as soon as possible.

M Homme, 33 Princes Square, first floor (0141-204 0980; for further inquiries, call 0171-383 3888).

Melanie Rickey

Black double breasted padded car coat, £149; chunky knit jumper with colour stripe, £85

All by Morgan Homme, for stockist inquiries call 0171-383 3888.



Black satinised single breasted jacket, £155; black satinised trousers, £69.99; black triple ribbed jumper with white trim, £49.99.



مركز من الامارات

Give football and cricket a sporting chance

Until recently the government minister who could best be relied on to speak without engaging his brain was undoubtedly Tony Banks, a talent for which the Minister for Sport appeared to have some pride. Since his appointment in May, Mr Banks has spouted happily on just about any subject within his brief – and a few that aren't – often without ever laying himself open to the charge that he was giving a considered opinion.

His latest proposal, which might be described as half-baked except that it does not appear to have been baked at all, is that national anthems should be banned from international football matches "because then sport becomes almost an extension of war". Like much of what Mr Banks has said, it caused a mixture of indignation and incredulity, but appears destined to be ignored.

Over the weekend, however, a new contender stepped into the ring to challenge Banks's position: his boss, Chris Smith. Once again the subject was sport, which is probably significant. Sport has traditionally been regarded with contempt in Whitehall, rated as less important than overseas aid and generating less kudos than the cones hotline. Sport simply does not attract the rigour of policy scrutiny that applies in other corners of the government machine. But, in the late Nineties, sport is high profile. It ought to be viewed as

carrying significant political clout, not only because it engages the energies and passions of so many voters, but also because it is an increasingly powerful economic force.

As Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Mr Smith has been considering proposals to set up a British Academy for Sport with lottery money, a project initiated by the previous administration in response to Britain's repeated sporting failures (our athletes at the last Olympics; our footballers when they failed to qualify for the last World Cup; our cricketers virtually every time they walk out on to grass). The new Labour government was committed to establishing some form of Academy, but the details had yet to be formulated.

On Sunday Mr Smith began to enlighten us. Or rather, he didn't. His first move was to tell the *Independent* on Sunday that he intended the new academy to concentrate on the non-commercial Olympic sports such as athletics and swimming, to the exclusion of the major professional ones of football, cricket and rugby. He repeated the line on the radio on Sunday, with the explanation that money-making sports could be expected to finance their own academies.

Already Smith's thinking appeared to be flawed, and it was quickly pounced on by Lord MacLaurin, the Tory peer who used to run Tesco and

is now the chairman of the England and Wales Cricket Board. While few would deny that football, flush with Sky's millions, has more than enough spare cash to spend on nurturing young talent for lucrative careers in the Premier League, the same is hardly true of rugby, and it is certainly not true of cricket.

The national summer sport has been in a parlous state for most of its history, saddled as it is with an antiquated county system whose games frequently attract fewer spectators than the average barn dance. Test matches remain popular, but the profits made from this

form of the game are quickly gobbled up by the impoverished counties.

To suggest, as Mr Smith appeared to, that cricket would be able to put something aside to endow its own academy was frankly ludicrous, and Lord MacLaurin was quick to say so. He went on to point out that the one way his sport might be able to raise money was by having Test cricket removed from television's listed events, and thus able to be sold on the free market.

Mr Smith then suggested that Test cricket's televised status might be subject to review, and the sport's less than

splendid reaction to its exclusion from a national academy was interpreted by some as evidence of a covert deal. By now Mr Smith's utterances bore all the appearance of policy formulated on the hoof: muddled, indistinct, and with off-the-cuff solutions that threatened to become problems of their own.

Then, just as the possibility of Test cricket joining Sky's exclusive range created its own controversy, Mr Smith's line changed again. Perhaps cricket might have its own academy, he suggested, separately funded with lottery money. This idea received a guarded welcome from cricket's hierarchy, but in making it Mr Smith is obscuring the real issue: why shouldn't cricket, and rugby for that matter, be part of the wider national academy?

By concentrating such a scheme on non-commercial sports the Government conjures the faintly surreal picture of millions of pounds of lottery money being spent on our volleyball and synchronised swimming teams (Olympic sports, both) while nothing is done to help develop the country's cricketers, in whom the nation invests far more collective passion. Put bluntly, the nation cares far more about producing outstanding young cricketers, rugby players and footballers than young rowers or fencers. Why, then, should they be denied access to lottery money?

The example offered by the Aus-

tralian Institute of Sport is instructive. Its cricketing academy has been hugely successful, providing a handful of the current all-conquering Australian team – including Shane Warne – and beating Michael Atherton's grown-up team twice in a weekend on England's last visit.

Though based in Adelaide, away from the institute's Canberra headquarters, the cricketers, like many other sports players down under, operate within the umbrella of the institute as a whole; they all benefit from the cross-pollination of expertise on such things as fitness training, sports medicine and diet. Such a scheme is surely what is required in Britain, with all the sports linked under one academy, and benefiting from the same source of funding.

A couple of years ago when the Australian institute was being scrutinised to see what Britain might learn, its then director said: "The great advantage that Britain has is that they can plan it. Our system just grew, and it wasn't very coherent." Unless Mr Smith is very careful, ours will be a lot less coherent even than the Aussie example. Tony Blair, when he gets back from his well-deserved break, should get a grip on the whole enterprise. Sport is, in one sense, utterly unimportant; and then, of course, it matters more than almost anything that politicians get to meddle in. They had better get it right this time.



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• LETTERS TO THE EDITOR •

Devolution: a recipe for corruption

Sir: Those who are concerned about corruption and cronyism in the Scottish Labour Party ("Suicide MP: call for wider probe", 18 August) should ponder the malign implications of Donald Dewar's proposals for the election of a Scottish Parliament. Half the MPs will be elected from party lists according to the proportion of votes cast for that party. The selection of names for those lists, the order in which they appear on the list, and thus their chances of election, will be determined by party officials, not by constituencies or the electorate.

If ever there was a recipe for putting corruption and cronyism at the heart of a parliamentary democracy this is it. Those who find their way onto this *nomenklatura* might be the most corrupt and unpopular people in Scotland but if they are top of the Labour party list they will still become MPs. Is this how we want Scotland to be governed?

Unless the Labour Party grasps this nettle now, the devolution referendum deserves to fail.

A E BOYLE
Professor of Public International Law
University of Edinburgh

Sir: I am an Englishman living in Scotland and I am David I. I am a very good one at that.

I am completely in agreement with him on the stance he has taken against the devolution of power to Scotland as proposed by the new government. At the weekend a senior Labour figure (name not quoted) was reported to have referred to "Tam's intervention as 'old Tam's rantings'", but I think he seems to be the only MP who realises the dangers to the United Kingdom's union.

I really wish people in England would wake up to the dangers and lobby their MPs. The dangers are:

1. That the Scottish Parliament and British one will constantly disagree, thus playing into the hands of the SNP.

2. If the Scottish parliament does not fulfil the wishes of the Scots they will blame the English and turn to the SNP.

3. English people in Scotland and Scots people in England will begin to feel alienated.

4. If, as the SNP hopes, the Scottish parliament becomes a stepping stone to independence, England will not have as much influence in Europe or the rest of the world as it does at present.

The only way devolved government can possibly work is if for all of the UK has assemblies for all of the German *Länder*. Then the West Lothian question would not apply.

ALAN GILFORD
Lanlithgo, West Lothian

Sir: What does devolution do? At best it duplicates effort. Otherwise it provides inferior government for the devolved territory. I do not accept that different parts of the country require separate laws or policies. To claim that a resident of Lancashire is essentially distinct from one of Huddersfield is racist and wrong. Culture may differ, but the legal system should reflect uniform underlying principles.

Britain (and the rest of the world) should reduce the level of devolution. The Scottish and Welsh offices need to be abolished. English and Scottish law must be



harmonised. (Scottish law is often superior. When this is so, why cannot the remainder of the United Kingdom benefit from it?) We need a new Act of Union to guarantee equal rights to all Her Majesty's subjects and all parts of her realm. Give devolution the raspberry it deserves.

LANC K GREEN
Newport, Monmouthshire

Massacres at the partition of India

Sir: There have been several estimates mentioned recently of the number of deaths caused by the partition of India 50 years ago – figures of 250,000 to half a million have been put forward.

As a former officer of the Indian Police who was in the very thick of the disturbances in Lahore and Amritsar before the partition, and as Assistant Inspector General in charge of the Indian Punjab railway police, I was interested to hear on the Channel 4 programme "Stones of the Raj" the higher estimate of one million deaths.

The pendulum of death and destruction swung, over a period of many months both before and after 15 August 1947, across the whole of northern India from Calcutta to Kabul, and back again. During those months death was everywhere: in the towns and cities, in the thousands of villages, on the trains, on the roads. One of my duties in the railway police was to meet refugee trains, usually at Amritsar, coming in from newly created Pakistan.

The carnage on these trains was beyond belief – to men, women and down to the smallest infants. The

trains were packed with thousands upon thousands of dead bodies, and many more were strewn along the track sides. The same thing was happening in the opposite direction, where trains taking refugees out of India were, with the connivance of the railway staff, being deliberately derailed so that the passengers could easily be massacred. There was a madness in the air that was almost tangible.

In addition, nature took a hand that dreadful summer. During the monsoon there were flash floods in some places which swept away untold thousands of refugees along with their bullock carts and all their possessions.

An old Indian Civil Service friend (who stayed on in Pakistan) and I were recently discussing the question of the number of deaths, and he agreed with me that it must have been anything between one and two million, probably closer to two than to one.

It will be many years yet, on both sides of the border, before the bitterness of partition is forgotten.

F B MANLEY
Richmond, Surrey

Weather or not

Sir: Forecasters on TV and radio assume that "sunny" is what we all want: "rainy" or "chilly" calls for an apology. And this at a time of national water crisis. Some of us enjoy a balanced climate and presentation that is equally so.

JOHN H PAIN
London SW3

Checks on dental care

Sir: There are important differences between medical and dental care that should be considered when making reference to the changes reported in the provision of NHS dental care ("Ministers study cut in free dentistry on NHS", 15 August).

For dental care the patient is expected to attend for a routine check-up within 15 months if they are to remain registered within the NHS. This is not the case for medicine, where there is no onus on the patient to attend.

People normally go to the doctor when they feel ill, and there is the benefit of feeling better having done so. This is not the case for dentistry; the majority of patients attend symptom-free. The dental examination is in effect a routine screening programme.

Finally, patient charges. In medicine, with the exception of prescription charges, care remains largely non-charged.

In a society which is becoming more "risk" oriented the question whether the benefits of dental attendance outweigh the costs. This may account for the large decrease in registration levels that have occurred in the 25- to 34-year-olds seen. This age cohort has seen major reductions in disease levels when compared with older groups: their risk of future problems is in consequence far smaller.

The outcome that the

Government needs to set is not based on the percentage of the population registered but what percentage need care but cannot obtain it.

PAUL BATCHELOR
Queen Mary and Westfield College
London E1

Sir: The worst error in your report was saying that porcelain crowns which cost at least £150 have been withdrawn. I wish! When I qualified in 1981, a dentist got £71 (worth more than £120 today) for the type of crown in question. Today it is £80.

There is not enough money in the public kitty to get us back to the financial position we were in. It is only a matter of time before NHS dentistry goes the way of the optical services.

Dr GUY SIMMONS
Barking, Essex

Racial weapons

Sir: The point about genetically engineered weapons designed to attack particular ethnic groups (Briefing, 18 August) is that they could be used in a close combat zone where one's own troops have a fair chance of also being hit. Otherwise, conventional weapons would suffice.

If in the Gulf war, for example, we had dropped gas bombs that only killed Arabs but not Caucasians, we would have done so all over the Kuwait-Iraq border, and the war would soon have been over. Of course such weapons would also

have killed the Kuwaitis and half of our allies, as well as a small percentage of our own soldiers.

The truth is that most western nations are too ethnically diverse now for such weapons to be of use to any side. The main defence would be to ensure that the armed forces maintain a good ethnic mix so that in the event of attack some soldiers would survive to hold the line for reinforcements.

Non-western nations are immune to such attacks from us because there would always be small but unacceptable losses on our own side, unless we introduced ethnically pure battalions, which would be politically unacceptable.

TIM EVERSON
Kingston, Surrey

Busy at the Tate

Sir: Jan Burrell's interpretation of visitor figures at the Tate (report, 16 August) was misleading. Last year's high visitor figures were entirely due to the Cézanne effect, which added over a half million to our regular attendance.

Far from the trend being down, attendance at the Tate is conspicuously up. This, our centenary year, is set to be the busiest ever. Along with our highly popular Centenary Displays, the exhibition programme includes three major blockbusters: Mondrian, Rossetti and Bonnard. Last Saturday was the gallery's busiest day ever, with over 8,000 visitors, and we are already up over 20 per cent on figures for the same period last year.

DAMIAN WHITMORE
Head of Communications
Tate Gallery
London SW1

Hiss and boo the musical purists

Sir: Reading the correspondence on the subject of the Proms' audiences (Letters, 14 and 19 August) has reminded me why it is so long since I have been to a concert in a non-performing role.

The modern institution of the classical concert seems to be specially designed to frighten off "outsiders". The quasi-religious atmosphere is reinforced by an arcane set of commandments for the "congregation": thou shalt clap in the right places (try explaining to a first-time concert-goer why the leader is applauded before he/she has played a note), thou shalt not make noises in the wrong place, and so on.

What would lure me back to concerts would be a return to the pre-Victorian days when audience participation was the norm: oh, to have been in the audience when Mozart's Paris Symphony was premiered – the spontaneous reaction of the audience during the performance was entirely what Mozart intended. Had Mozart been greeted by the hushed reverence of today's concerts, he would have wondered what had gone wrong.

So go on then, Promenaders, if you're excited, shout and clap, if you're shocked, hiss and boo, if you're just plain bored, talk amongst yourselves. Should any of the "cognoscenti" ask you to keep quiet, I would suggest that you advise them to go and buy the CD: they could go and listen to the music without the interruptions of others less "knowledgeable" than themselves.

BRIAN R MOORE
Exeter

Take a break

Sir: Why must we have a retirement age at all? (As people live longer let them work longer", 18 August?) We still let ourselves be dragged into cohorts, as in the Industrial Revolution, with training followed by work, followed by pension.

In our flexible world it would make better sense for everyone to alternate periods of education, employment and retirement throughout life, according to personal as well as economic circumstances.

Much of the stigma of unemployment would vanish if it were considered normal for people of "working age" to be taking time to raise young children or to further their own education.

P J STEWART
Oxford

Galic wit

Sir: I like the French (Letters, 14, 16 and 18 August). I find them invigorating and stimulating. They call a spade a spade, they do not suffer fools gladly and they give no quarter. Perhaps that is why many of the English cannot cope with them.

JOHN CUNDILL
London SW15

Old enemies

Sir: John Prescott's remarks about Peter Mandelson ("Hope you claw your way on, Peter", 19 August) remind me of Ernie Bevin's retort when a colleague remarked of Mandelson's grandfather, Herbert Morrison, that Herbert was his own worst enemy – "Not while I'm alive, he ain't".

TOBY SIMON
Enfield

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number. Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk. E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. We regret we are unable to acknowledge unpublished letters.

analysis

From Wall St to the City of London, the business lunch of the yuppie years is back, finds Ann Treneman - though in a guise more suited to the 1990s

Pat Cetta runs the kind of steakhouse that makes America great, but his restaurant is known for something besides its menu: a mob boss was murdered on the pavement outside Sparks Steak House on East 46th Street in New York a few years ago. This has now become "the incident", and it's the kind of thing you don't really want to mention. I'm not bothered, though, because I have called Mr Cetta about a different sort of mob and a different sort of death: lunch.

There is a rumour that lunch is simply not what it used to be in New York. It has become - well - a social event. The chat is almost as light as the food, and the sparkling water flows like wine. These days, the serious uncorking doesn't occur until 5pm - for this is now Wall Street's new power-eating hour.

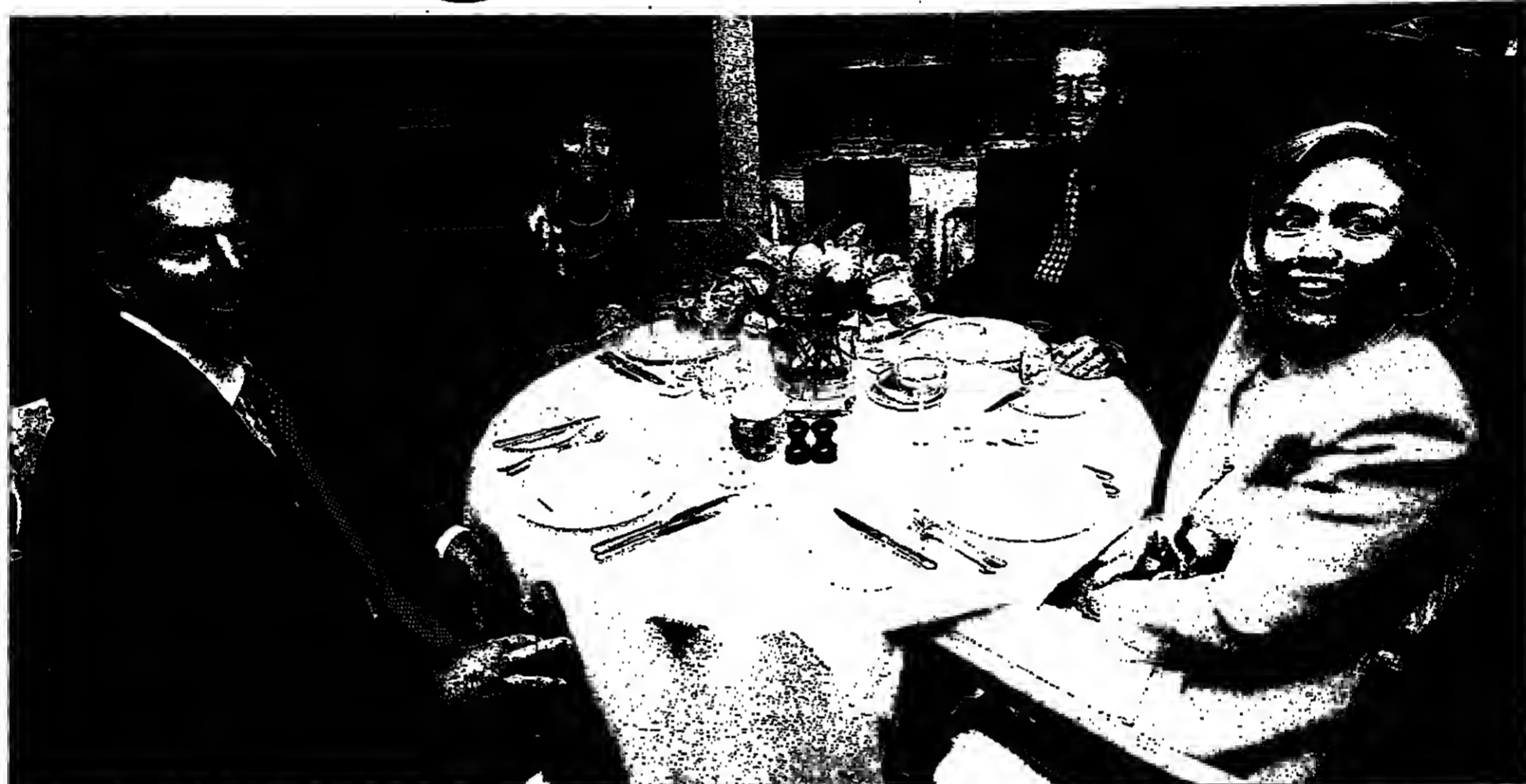
"Lunch is gone. Lunch is a thing of the past," one broker maintains as his surf and turf arrives with a \$100 bottle of wine at a Wall Street haunt - and it isn't even 6pm yet.

They are calling it the power dinner, the early bird special, the "relationship" dinner for those whose passion is money and the making of it. Mr Cetta has a theory about this which he is eager to share.

"This is how I see it. I think the whole thing really started a few years ago with this thing called downsizing. People started to worry a little about their jobs, and they weren't going to take off three hours in the middle of the day to go and



Power-lunching is passé, darling. Let's do dinner



Business or pleasure? The Blairs dine with the Clintons at London's Pont de la Tour. Early dining looks like becoming a way of life for businessmen over here, too

have lunch. They want to be at their desk. They don't want to miss anything. Now they come in here about 5pm. They've been at work since 7am. You have to realise they work through lunch, so this early dinner really is their lunch. They are ready to relax and to eat.

And Sparks does not disap-

point, because this is the perfect place for power eating. Its menu declares it to be "The Fort Knox of Fine Aged Prime Beef". Here you can feast on the finest 20-ounce sirloin steak, large live lobsters and top it off with a slice of walnut pecan pie à la mode. There are 30 kinds of single malt whisky and a wine cellar with 100,000

bottles. Wall Street types love it. It's just that these days, Mr Cetta explains, they love it a little later in the day than before. But if you think eating early means eating light, think again. "This is not a light meal," says Pat Felitti, the manager of Morton's of Chicago. Don't be confused by the name: Morton's is a chain, and this particular one is near the World Financial Centre in Manhattan. "There is the 24-ounce porterhouse or the 16-ounce rib-eye with an appetiser and salad and so on, plus dessert and coffee." The 230 names on his wine list do not go unread either.

Most people say that it could not happen in Britain, but then again no one thought it would happen in New York.

"I've never seen anything like it before," says Ken Aretsky, who used to be president of the 21 Club and nine months ago opened a restaurant called Faron at East 46th Street. "When I was at the 21 Club, we

had nobody at five o'clock. But what I see - and what others in the business are seeing - is that the brokers are not going out to lunch anymore. Instead they come here at about five. They are here to do business and they are spending money."

This sort of thing knows no season. It has been a hot summer in this city but the brokers are still ordering steak and what Mr Aretsky calls "big wine." New York right now is on a roll. The market is going up every day. There is a tremendous boom and it feeds into what is going on," says Mr Aretsky.

And what is going on is lucrative indeed, because the brokers have created a new dinner sitting. "I love this trend because it adds a whole other meal period," says Pat Felitti. "You get a nice early bite and then it still gives you plenty of room for the regular dinner at 8pm."

So here is the Felitti guide to

early eating. The market closes at 4.30pm and by 5pm the traders and brokers are walking through his door. They go to the bar, or sit right down. "We take reservations from 5pm. Most nights - and especially midweek - the dining room is full by 6pm. We seat 130 there and then we have another 90 in the banquet rooms. All of those are filled with meetings of eight, 12 or sometimes 20 people. For small presentations and things like that."

The jackets come off and the ties are flipped over the shoulder. Almost everyone in the restaurant is male, and the atmosphere is boisterous. Red meat, red wine and machismo do not come cheap, however. On average it costs \$75 per head and the tables look like a public service health warning for heart disease.

It may sound like a debauch but they treat it like a meeting. Mr Cetta remembers a time when people met in this way at

lunch, too, but there's no question it is more fun to celebrate after work than in the middle of it.

As one broker said: "I talk more to these guys than I do to my own wife." Now, thanks to the "early bird special", he can talk to both, because by 7.30pm the coffee cups are empty. Allow for the commute home and Wall Street's finest can be back in the suburbs, reading the children a bedtime story or even talking to the wife, by 8pm easy.

So could it happen here? Ian Mitchell is the managing director of Eures's London and City catering operations and he remembers when no one believed in the power breakfast either. Now even the most dedicated sceptics are chewing over a few figures at 8am. In fact, Mr Mitchell admits to having munched the very morning of our interview. "Orange juice and croissants. We've got a good early start and it does

seem the thing to do now. I suppose to a certain extent it's meeting in your sleeping time. We don't want to waste any part of the day."

One of the people munching with him that morning turns out to be Simon Titchener, a Eares business development executive who had just come back from the States with his own power dinner story to tell. "I did feel quite strange having dinner so early. Normally half past five is my time for an afternoon cake or something. But once I got over the shock I did quite enjoy it. The evening is free - and they value their leisure time - and I did actually sleep better. It's much better for you."

But Britons tend not to care too much about such things and Bob Cotton, the director of corporate affairs for catering giant Gardner Merchant, is not convinced. America may set some trends - lunches are lighter, fresher and less alcoholic these days on both sides of the Atlantic - but not when it comes to timing.

"When you eat is about local culture," he says. "If you go to Holland, lunch is still all about a cold sandwich. That is a power lunch in Holland. If you go to Brussels, which is only 50 miles away, lunch is still a five-course event that takes two hours." And what about here? "The power hour is still 1pm."

In London, the most powerful hour of them all - pace Messrs Blair and Clinton, who recently sat down to dinner at the Pont de la Tour not long after the traditional British tea time - ticks away at the Savoy Grill.

Here the panelling is yew, the glasses sparkling and the tables just so. The maître d', Angelo Maresca, is one of those men with whom one feels instantly at home. If lunch is about comfort food then this sort of service is as comfortable as it gets. His regulars hardly need to enunciate their requests. He knows their special table, whether they want sparkling or still, the correct wine, how they like their favourite meal cooked, whether it is one sugar or two in the coffee. "We take all the worry from them," says Mr Maresca, and even I feel better upon hearing this news.

Wall Street's early bird dinner may be all about steak and machismo, but power eating at the Savoy is subtler than that. Here any food can be powerful of, more accurately, make you look powerful. The thing about the Savoy Grill is that you never know what the day will bring," says the chef, David Sharland.

Some customers have their favourites and sometimes I only need to see the name to know how to cook it. One must have only gluten-free food. Another insists on having machos and so we do those for him. One wanted baked beans. "Baked beans? From a tin?" Yes, that's what he wanted and so we flambéed him some.

Now that is just about as powerful as it gets. Of course there's no real reason why you can't have flambéed baked beans at 6pm, too.

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The Major Years: a memoir in the making

Yesterday morning on the Today programme they were discussing why it is so badly. It seems that new books on Tony Blair and William Hague are currently on the worst-seller list, and Julian Critchley and Tony Howard were being asked to explain why.

The real reason is, of course, that neither Blair nor Hague has yet done anything worth writing about, but the point made by both Critchley and Howard was that Alan Clark's racy diaries had changed the face of political biography and made everything else seem plodding. They agreed that Harold Wilson and Norman Fowler, and Peter Walker and Kenneth Baker, had all produced impressively dull books, that it was unlikely that the Thatcher book would ever get its advance back for HarperCollins ("Many hands make heavy work," someone wittily remarked of the Thatcher milestone masquerading as a book) and that the only really good political memoir of recent years had been Denis Healey's. Austin Mitchell was bright and independent

enough to write a good political memoir, someone said, but who else...?

What was extraordinary was that nobody mentioned John Major as the possible writer of a political autobiography. Here he is, newly tumbled from office, newly resigned as Tory leader, with nothing to do except watch cricket. What clearer signs could there be that the man is wanting to write his life story?

Why did Critchley and Howard not even mention him as a candidate?

Because they must have known the truth. That John Major is writing his life story, in conditions of the utmost secrecy. How do I know this? Because I am the man who has been chosen to do it with him.

You may have recently noticed at the bottom of this column the apologetic rubric: "Miles Kingston is away" or "Miles Kingston is on holiday" or some such mild untruth. I have in fact been at a secret hideaway in Hertfordshire working with John Major on his life story. And hard going it has been. The man has obviously been so schooled in parliamentary



Miles Kingston

life that he can hardly bring himself to admit anything. This may be excellent for a Prime Minister, but it is disastrous for the subject of a life story.

"What are your chief memories of your prime ministerial years?" I asked him on the first day, by way of a softerener.

"We came into office determined to press on with our reforms," he said, leaning forward on the table in that familiar pose of the pub bore at the saloon bar which he always adopted during PM's Question Time. "We had a mandate, and we

were going to use that mandate to press ahead with privatisation, and efficiency, and cutting through red tape..."

"Mr Major!" I said sharply. "We are going to be wasting our time if you persist in regurgitating the hack phrases of Central Office or whoever dreamt up this dreadful stuff. I want your story. I want to know how you remember the Major Years."

"The Major Years," he repeated dreamily. "The Major Years... I like it... Is that what we are going to call the book?"

"The title comes later," I said strictly. "First of all we have to establish your story. For a start, tell me how you remember it all. What are the memories that come back most vividly?"

He sat for a moment reminiscing inwardly. Then he seemed to snap out of it. "Nothing," he said cautiously. "Nothing comes back at all."

"Nothing?" "You must remember that we had inherited the most holy mess from the previous Labour government. But we brought fresh hope. We had a

mandate, and we were going to use that mandate to press ahead with privatisation, and efficiency, and cutting through red tape..."

"Mr Major!" I said perceptively. "This is a waste of time. We are going to get nowhere if you will persist in mouthing platitudes. Please let me have your own impressions, not your platitudes honed for the market-place..."

Mr Major rose from his chair at this point and got down a large book from the shelf. For a moment I thought with wild delight that it was some form of journal which he had secretly kept during his Downing Street years. But then I realised that it was a dictionary, and I saw, over his shoulder, somewhat to my surprise, that he was looking up the word "platitude".

"Gosh! Splendid!" he said, as he read the definition. "I like the sound of these things!"

I realised then that it was going to be harder than I had ever imagined.

Tomorrow: why Michael Howard was never sacked, and what John Major can never forgive Chris Patten for

business & city

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FINANCIAL JOURNAL
OF THE YEAR

Laura Ashley to close two factories

Chief executive expects half-year loss of £4.5m

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

Laura Ashley confirmed its investors' worst fears yesterday when it issued a long-expected profits warning and announced the closure of two of its factories in Wales with the loss of almost 200 jobs.

The severity of the announcement caused dismay in the City as the company said it would record a £4.5m loss at the half-year stage and would only break even at the full year.

The warning, which included fresh disappointment about a slowdown in home furnishings sales, will intensify the pressure on Ann Iverson, the company's American chief executive who was paid £1m last year, to step down. She was appointed 18 months ago to revive the ailing company's fortunes.

Laura Ashley has had a dreadful few months, with a string of senior executives, including design and buying director Basha Cohen, leaving the group. Now Ms Iverson has been forced to put US expansion plans, the central part of her new strategy, on hold. The shares, which have been as high as 220p in the past 12 months, closed a penny lower at 55.5p.

Nick Bubb, retail analyst at Societe Generale Strauss Turnhill, said: "It's pretty hopeless. It is a very real shortfall and there is no hint of an apology."

Another analyst said Ms Iverson's position was looking increasingly vulnerable: "She's paid a lot of money and she's made a lot of mistakes. Where is the accountability? If the business is not pointing in the right direction by next spring she will have to think again."

Ms Iverson said yesterday that she

was determined to stay at the company and see her strategy through: "I am deeply committed and I believe the strategy is right. The potential of the brand has not been realised."

She said she did not regret returning to Britain from her native America to take the job: "Absolutely not. I believe the brand has potential but the scale of the problems were greater than anticipated."

Ms Iverson said Sir Bernard Ashley, Laura Ashley's widow, whose family speaks for 35 per cent of the group, had not discussed taking the group private. She said both Sir Bernard and the Japanese group Jusco, which also owns a substantial stake, were supportive of the strategy.

Ms Iverson will receive a pay cut to just her basic salary of £450,000 this year as the performance of the company is too poor to trigger bonus payments.

The £4.5m first-half loss will include a £1m charge for the closure of two garment sewing factories in Wales at Caernarfon and Machynlleth. The company will increase sourcing from overseas, though two other garment factories in Wales are unaffected.

The decision was criticised both by the unions, who blamed the closures on poor management, and the local mayor, William Jones, who said it was a devastating blow to local employment: "The saddest thing is that there is nothing else here. There is no other work for these girls."

Laura Ashley blamed its profits warning on a slowdown in sales following a return to full-price retailing, continued below-hedge sales in new stores in the United States and a £2m advertising campaign in America. Laura Ashley will not open any fur-



Ann Iverson: Determined to stay at the company and see her strategy through. 'I am deeply committed'

Photograph: Brendan Connolly

ther stores in the US until the new store performance improves. Ms Iverson said the company would continue to offer women's wear, children's wear and home furnishings.

"The breadth of the brand is not the issue. It is the infrastructure," she said. The company's systems have not been able to ensure that the right product reached the right locations

at the right time. Group like-for-like sales were 11 per cent up in the six months to 26 July. However, adjusting the figures for currency effects brings the total to 5 per cent.

The company has been affected by boardroom departures, including its merchandising director and UK finance director. An announcement on the design appointment will be made soon.

Jaguar looks at building new car in UK

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Jaguar, the luxury car group owned by Ford of the US, yesterday said there was a strong possibility that it would build a new "small" saloon in the UK, in an investment programme that could exceed £500m.

Nick Scheele, Jaguar's chairman, confirmed that initial feasibility studies for a third Jaguar model range had proved positive and a more in-depth study into the business case for the car, code-named X400, would be completed in three months.

Jaguar believes it could sell 100,000 of the cars, doubling its current production plans, which would compete with the successful BMW 3-series. It would also provide thousands more jobs, on top of the company's 6,300 strong workforce.

While Mr Scheele put the chances of pressing ahead with the X400 at "no more than 50-50", he said he hoped it could be built in Britain.

"I'd like to think we can find somewhere in the UK that's economically possible. We're looking at our two sites in the West Midlands by doing something innovative there, because we just don't have the capacity there. We could then move on to look at alternatives, including a location elsewhere in the UK."

The biggest barrier to producing the car at Jaguar's existing plants was capacity at its Castle Bromwich paint facility, which was already being expanded for the arrival of the new medium-sized saloon range in 1999. The £600m investment project to build the car, the X200, was confirmed last year after the Government offered a £80m state aid package.

Jaguar hoped to assemble the new small car in its Brown's Lane production plant, but said it may need a 100-acre greenfield site, adding substantially to the cost. Mr Scheele continued: "There's just no way we can find a site like that nearby."

Coventry Council, which had already been in discussions with Jaguar about the project, said it believed it could come up with a location. Chris Beck, from the authority's development directorate, said: "We would try to meet their needs by offering a range of sites in Coventry and the surrounding area."

Mr Scheele insisted the UK's chances of building the car did not depend on the level of government aid. "It's true to say most investments which create that number of jobs are liable to state aid."

Branson and BA in new clash

Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

The battle for the skies above the Atlantic reached a new pitch yesterday as the bosses of Virgin Atlantic and British Airways clashed over BA's plan to link up with American Airlines.

Richard Branson, chairman of Virgin Atlantic and one of the deal's most vociferous critics, told US Congressmen that the proposed alliance between BA and American was "one of the most outrageous developments in the history of air transportation". He said the two airlines were far too big to get together and a link would just put prices up.

Mr Branson was appearing in London before the influential US House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, which was also meeting BA yesterday.

He also accused BA of having

several secret agreements with other state carriers that would only come to light after the deal with American had gained government approval. "We believe that they have secret agreements with JAL [Japan Air Lines], Iberia [Spain's flag carrier] and KLM," said Mr Branson.

However Bob Ayling, the chief executive of BA, went on the attack by claiming that Virgin Atlantic was "afraid of new competition".

Mr Ayling said his deal would allow UK airports to be opened to all US airlines. "Virgin wants to maintain its cosy position at Heathrow with access denied to airlines such as Continental, US Airways, Delta, TWA and Northwest... Virgin is afraid of increased competition."

The deal between BA and American, the world's largest airline in terms of sales, is already way behind schedule and

has floundered in the face of regulatory pressures.

Karel Van Miert, the European Commissioner in charge of competition policy, has made it clear he will not endorse the deal in its current form. The price demanded by Mr Van Miert, which involves BA having to give up 350 take-off and landing slots at Heathrow, is too high for either airline.

For Mr Branson, who meets Mr Van Miert later today, slots are not the only issue. "I would also like to see a review of frequent flier programmes and airport capacity considered," he said. "Small carriers wishing to start transatlantic flights would find it impossible without access to the new mega-airlines' frequent flier programme."

Mr Branson also proposed a new mechanism to help ease the slot constraint at Heathrow. He believes that slots should be

offered on a franchise basis, with government regulators letting them out to airlines who propose the most customer-friendly flights.

"It needs government intervention to bring about proper competition," said Mr Branson. If the new Labour government - with which Mr Ayling has links - refuses to challenge Brussels, many analysts believe BA will revert to a marketing alliance with American and hide its time for a full partnership.

BA would calculate that eventually, the pressure to open the skies over Europe would become so great that it could win clearance without having to bow to Mr Van Miert.

The US Congressional committee's deliberations are part of the overall American investigation into the alliance, although the key ruling will come from the European Commission.

Footsie bounces back as fears of German rate rise recede

Tom Stevenson
Financial Editor

Leading shares returned to favour yesterday after Wall Street continued its recovery from last Friday's sharp fall and the prospect of an imminent rise in German interest rates receded. The FTSE 100 index closed 79 points higher at 4914.0, clawing back some of the 4.7 per cent of its value it had lost in the previous five trading sessions.

Shares were boosted in early trading after the Bundesbank announced that its next securities repurchase would take place at an unchanged Repo rate of 3 per cent. Further encouragement was provided by a slowing in the rate of annual money supply growth in Ger-

many from June's 6.4 per cent to 5.7 per cent.

A tightening of German monetary policy also appeared less likely after a report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) said there was no need to raise interest rates. The report said inflation was under control, while the German economy was set to grow 2.25 per cent and a further 2.75 per cent next year on the back of the continuing depreciation of the mark.

Worries about an early rise in German interest rates were a major contributor to last Friday's heavy stock market falls on both sides of the Atlantic. But doubts crept in after evidence emerged of a split within the Bundesbank over the need to raise interest rates.

Sterling moved higher again yesterday to close at just under £1.02/\$. The rise in the pound pegged back the market's second-liners, which include many exchange rate vulnerable exporters that have benefited from the perception that sterling has peaked for the time being. The FTSE 250 index of companies just outside the top flight added 17.2 points to 4680.8.

Second-line stocks were also affected by worries about retail sales figures due to be announced today which are expected to show a sharp rise in activity on the high street following this summer's building society conversion windfalls. That could increase the pressure for further interest rate rises which would put more upward pressure on the exchange rate.

Currency turmoil sends Hang Seng plunging

Stephen Vines
Hong Kong

Fighting talk by the Hong Kong government, anxious to scare off currency speculators, did nothing yesterday to reassure investors who flooded the stock market with sell orders, causing the blue-chip Hang Seng Index to plunge 619 points, wiping 3.8 per cent off its value.

Hong Kong is the latest financial centre to suffer from the turmoil that has hit Far Eastern stock markets in recent weeks, following sharp falls in many local currencies.

The fall in the Hang Seng, the fifth-highest in the exchange's history, was alleviated by a mid-afternoon bout of buy orders, which lifted the index from a 741-point loss earlier in the day. Alone among important East Asian currencies, the Hong Kong dollar has withstood



heavy currency speculation which yesterday saw the Thai baht slump to a new low of 33 against the US dollar.

The Korean currency fell to a seven-year low against the dollar, while the Indonesian rupiah dipped below the psychologically important 3,000 rupiah mark against the US currency in hectic trading.

Meanwhile the Philippine peso, the Malaysian ringgit and even the once rock-solid Singapore dollar were subject to selling pressure, countered by heavy government intervention.

The outbreak of speculative activity is putting to test a host of agreements signed last year under which East Asian countries pledged mutual assistance to fend off currency speculation. The highest beneficiary has been Thailand which has received considerable financial support, principally from Hong Kong and China, yet the value of its currency continues to slide.

In Hong Kong yesterday the local currency, which is tied to the US dollar at a fixed rate, remained steady against the greenback. On Monday, Joseph Yam, the chief executive of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, claimed victory against the

hedge funds, which he alleged had launched an offensive against the local currency the previous Friday.

"We have won the game so far with the help of the banks which pushed the interest rate up," he said.

Yesterday, Tung Chee-hwa, Hong Kong's new Chief Executive, stepped in to repeat claims made by his officials. "Any speculation who tries to attack the Hong Kong dollar will not succeed," he said firmly.

Analysts point out that Hong Kong and its new sovereign state China have combined foreign exchange holdings in excess of US\$200bn. This places the monetary authorities in a strong position to plunge into the market and battle it out with the speculators.

Hong Kong appears to have got within the speculator's sights simply because it is in a

region perceived to have overvalued and vulnerable currencies.

Many Hong Kong-based investors are playing it safe and pushing funds into US dollars but the real winner may turn out to be the Japanese yen which has already slumped against the greenback and looks increasingly undervalued.

Meanwhile the decline in Hong Kong share prices is seen by some analysts as a useful correction in the market, the fastest-rising in the region this year, aside from Taiwan. Before yesterday's sell-off the local market was up almost 20 per cent since the beginning of the year. Most other Asian markets are well down on the year.

No one in Hong Kong was brave enough yesterday to predict whether the share sell-off marked the beginning of a bear market. This uncertainty was

linked to concerns that the Hong Kong government's aggressive market activity to protect the local currency might ultimately prove too costly even for a treasury filled with foreign exchange reserves.

Despite the assistance of the People's Bank of China, which is said to have set aside \$50bn to defend the Hong Kong dollar, constant intervention in the market and the raising of interest rates might prove too costly to an economy dangerously vulnerable to external influences.

The pressure on the Hong Kong dollar is rekindling the debate about whether the territory should retain its fixed link with the US dollar. Prominent advocates of breaking the link, such as the banker David Li, argue that it would be better to tie the local currency to a basket of currencies.

British Gas steps up fight on revenue cap

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

British Gas is stepping up its latest battle with Clare Spottiswoode, the industry regulator, over the implementation of big cuts in pipeline charges recommended by the Monopolies & Mergers Commission.

The company last night submitted its formal response to Ms Spottiswoode's proposals, accusing her of going beyond the MMC's report in a move which could cost BG up to £500m in revenues over five years.

BG yesterday refused to rule out calling a judicial review into the changes.

The MMC investigation largely endorsed Ofgas's planned price regime, recommending a cut of £29 in average domestic bills from this year. At issue in the new row is how much benefit BG should gain from fluctuations in the amount of gas running through its pipelines.

With demand for gas rising sharply, BG's earnings would be likely to go up significantly. Ms Spottiswoode has proposed placing a cap on these revenues after concerns that the company's estimates for demand, on which the price controls were based, were too conservative.

The move by BG came as one of the leading gas analysts suggested the company could be on the verge of a £1bn share buy-back programme and could

raise £100m this year from asset sales. Simon Flowers, from NatWest Securities, also increased his valuation of the company to 280p, a share premium.

Though BG reluctantly accepted the MMC's conclusions, David Varney, the chief executive, has since claimed the revenue cap departed "fundamentally" from the MMC's recommendations. The MMC report recognised the regulator's worries, but proposed capping only half the revenues.

The company's response will reiterate its view that Ms Spottiswoode should accept the MMC's conclusions "in their entirety". It is also likely to fuel the row by expressing BG's "disappointment" over the way the licence changes have been handled. The company will argue that a cap on all its revenues would mean it would face extra costs from the increases in demand, but would receive no more income.

Ogas, the watchdog, is likely to announce the licence modifications next month. A BG spokeswoman said the company was still working to seek implementation of the MMC's recommendations. "We would review the situation only if the need arose," she said.

The dispute has raised new questions about the role of utility regulators as the Government continues its review into regulation. Last week Northern Ireland Electricity referred a similar rift to a judicial review.

STOCK MARKETS					
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low
FTSE 100	4914.20	+79.20	+1.6	5086.80	4096.60
FTSE 250	4680.80	+16.80	+0.4	4729.40	4396.20
FTSE 350	2373.10	+32.50	+1.4	2438.00	2017.90
FTSE SmallCap	2239.74	+11.11	+0.5	2374.20	2178.29
FTSE All-Share	2317.83	+30.43	+1.3	2376.39	1989.78
New York	7881.87	+78.51	+1.0	8259.31	5092.94
Tokyo	18961.00	-80.10	-0.4	20881.07	17303.85
Hong Kong	15477.26	-619.62	-3.8	16673.27	12055.17
Frankfurt	4169.62	+91.02	+2.2	4438.93	2848.77

INTEREST RATES					
Index	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year	2 Year
UK	7.12	7.50	7.01	7.77	7.07
US	5.53	5.87	6.20	6.55	6.51
Japan	0.56	0.68	2.07	3.11	-
Germany	3.12	3.56	5.60	6.25	6.29

CURRENCIES

\$/£

\$/DM

\$/¥

Source: York University's Canada and US Stock Price 1200 Index

Pounds

	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
\$ (London)	1.6082	-0.47c	1.5483
\$ (N York)	1.6040	-0.01c	1.5483
DM (London)	2.9496	+1.40c	2.3124
¥ (London)	169.845	+¥10.178	167.046
\$/Index	102.6	+0.3	85.0

Dollar

	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
£ (London)	0.6228	+0.18	0.6459
£ (N York)	0.6234	-0.04c	0.6461
DM (London)	1.8394	+1.41c	1.4635
¥ (London)	118.195	+¥10.455	167.829
\$/Index	106.1	+0.5	86.3

OTHER INDICATORS

	Yesterday	Day's chg	Year Ago		Index	Yr Chg	Yr Ago	Next Figs
Oil Brent \$	19.07	+0.35	20.05	RPI	157.5	+0.02c	152.4	99.50
Gold \$	323.05	+0.2	395.60	GDP	112.8	+3.40c	109.1	21.00
Gold £	201.12	+0.77	209.14	Base Rates	7.00c		5.75	

Source: FT Information



This is not a battle BP can hope to win. Opinion may not be so behind Greenpeace as it was post the Brent Spar fiasco – but Greenpeace is still a potent force

BP has much to gain from keeping the peace

BP is being stupid suing Greenpeace. Power its attack on the company's drilling activities West of Shetland, whatever the rights and wrongs of the case. This appears from the outside to be one of those instances of the lawyers, with their narrow-minded legalistic approach to affairs, gaining the upper hand with executives, whose job it is to see the broader picture and act in the company's best interests, regardless of the legal principles involved.

The lawyers are of course right to insist that Greenpeace should be sued, as is BP's chief executive, John Browne, who presumably took the decision. Greenpeace has probably broken the law by causing criminal damage in this way. But since when did being right have anything to do with the shifting sands of public opinion? This is not a battle BP can hope to win. Public opinion may not be so wholeheartedly behind Greenpeace as it was post the Brent Spar fiasco – but Greenpeace is still a potent force with which many people sympathise.

BP should not have adopted such a confrontational approach in the first place. Its best hope now is to find a way of backing off with honour – say by promising to drop the action in return for an undertaking from Greenpeace not to invade its platforms again.

Let's take the argument in stages. Comparison is being made with McDonald's marathon libel case, which ended in an entirely pyrrhic victory for the company. This

was a case McDonald's couldn't possibly win, despite the ludicrous nature of many of the allegations made against it. Public support would always be for the little man. The BP case is a very different one. The McDonald's case was about defamation. To BP's credit, it has always taken the view that people can say what they like about the company provided they don't accuse it of corruption. No, this case is about unlawful interference with what the company is doing. BP, then, would appear to be on much firmer ground than McDonald's.

That doesn't make its position much better in the eyes of many, however, for in this day and age, people tend to think that multinationals, and particularly big oil companies, are fair game. Oil companies apply different rules when operating in developing countries. Why not give them a dose of their own medicine back home, the argument runs. When push comes to shove, most people will support the rule of law. For some reason there tends to be a blind spot with oil companies. In their case the invasion of property rights seems to be regarded as perfectly okay. Lamentable though this attitude might seem, it is a fact of life. BP is likely to do itself infinitely more damage by suing Greenpeace than the £1.4m in compensation it hopes to recover.

Until BP sued, few news organisations were taking much notice of Greenpeace's actions west of Shetland. The oil companies might justifiably have begun to believe that

Greenpeace was a spent force, at least in its targeting of their activities. Now it's all front page news again. It is BP not Greenpeace, that has made it so. It is easy to understand why chief executives should get all hot under the collar and jump on their high horses about this sort of thing. More often than not, however, the best policy is just to grin and bear it. At best BP has made an error judgement in suing Greenpeace.

The City gives Iverson six months

An Iverson, the flame-haired chief executive of Laura Ashley, was recently photographed in *Vogue* magazine wearing little more than a black leather coat. "This is what these City boys dream of seeing in me," she purred. "So I might as well live up to expectations."

Sadly for the by no means unattractive American, she is probably flustered herself. Sack cloth and ashes is what the City boys reckon Ms Iverson should be wearing this season. And as for living up to expectations, Laura Ashley's shareholders might have a thing or two to say on that one.

Yesterday's profits warning was not exactly unexpected, but for all that it still managed to surprise. On top of margin pressures as the company tries to end its reputation as a mark-down masochist, there are problems in America and even a slowdown in home

furnishings, just when everyone else in that sector seems to be coming in. The American difficulties must be particularly galling. Ms Iverson has staked her strategy on the great opportunities there. Now we have prices being cut by 75 per cent and the much vaunted roll-out of larger stores brought to a dramatic halt.

Perhaps she has been unlucky, perhaps the City got too carried away and there were some unrealistic expectations out there. Unfortunately, there has also been a host of mistakes – in buying and in systems to name just two. And a long list of directors have come and gone, including some of Ms Iverson's hand-picked lieutenants.

In the longer term the business may need to achieve more focus. Joint ventures and franchise agreements must be on the cards. Dropping childrenswear must be another possibility. The City boys are giving Ms Iverson six months to start some sort of turnaround. After that the knives will be out. Meanwhile, Ms Iverson's £1.2m-a-year salary seems to be a thing of the past. With no bonuses, she'll have to rub along on a piffling basic of £450,000. Poor dear.

Holding the line is costly for Hong Kong

The Hong Kong authorities' struggle to maintain their dollar's peg to the US greenback looks horribly familiar five years

after our own failed attempt to tie ourselves to a stronger currency. Having savaged easier prey from Bangkok to Jakarta, the speculators have moved in on the former colony with a vengeance and the cost of resisting their selling is in danger of crippling the stock and property markets.

In the past three trading days in Hong Kong, the Hang Seng index has fallen by more than 1,000 points, wiping more than 6.5 per cent from the value of the equity market. There is a real danger the present bout of nerves will turn to panic now that this last safe haven from the currency storms elsewhere in South-east Asia has been exposed.

Hong Kong still looks very different from its overblown neighbours where unsustainable growth rates and economic machismo on a grand scale have resulted in the mother of all property booms and busts. But a sound underlying economy and seamless transfer to China have provided little support from the circling vultures.

A battle royal between the deep pockets of Hong Kong's authorities and the only slightly less powerful force of the American speculative funds is brewing, with interbank rates above 10 per cent in a desperate bid to keep the currency close to its official rate against the dollar.

So soon after the handover there will be enormous pressure not to abandon the link, but the cost of holding the line is squeezing the pips uncomfortably.

Capital Corp sues three former employees

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

Troubled casinos operator Capital Corporation yesterday issued a writ against one of its former directors and two former employees "for conspiracy to injure the company and other matters arising since 1996". The company said it had taken the action "to defend the value of the business".

Capital has been hit by a series of damaging allegations about its operations which have included questions over its gaming controls and food and beverage operations as well as the conduct of directors.

Those cited in the writ are Kenneth Thompson, the former acting chief executive, Des Pereira, the former company secretary and head of finance, and Guy Hutchinson, the former purchasing manager for food and beverage.

The writ claims that the three men formed a "conspiracy" which included:

- bringing the company and its management into disrepute;
- hampering the company in the presentation of its business and the financial position in its audited accounts and its defence against the hostile £192m takeover attempt by London Clubs International; and
- that they encouraged 11 other employees to wrongfully terminate their contracts in April and that they disseminated confidential information about the company, including board minutes, to the press.

Capital is seeking damages, the return of all confidential information and an injunction preventing further disclosures.

There is an additional claim against Mr Thompson for damages "on any profits made by reason of his breach of his duty [to Capital Corporation] as a director from 7 September 1993 to 22 May 1997".

The writ claims that Mr Thompson, a former finance director of Royal Bank of Scotland, acted on behalf of Ogden Corporation, a rival US casino group in connection with the proposed acquisition of the Cromwell Sporting Enterprises business which owns the Cromwell Mint casino. Capital Corporation was also trying to acquire the Cromwell Mint casino at the same time.

There is a further claim that in early 1997 Mr Thompson, Mr Pereira and Mr Hutchinson acted "to make a secret profit" by procuring Capital to purchase high-quality Cuban cigars for £104,450 from a business in which they had an interest.

It is expected that Mr Thompson and Mr Pereira will hold a press conference later this week to present their case. It is also understood that Mr Thompson's lawyer has a letter from Ogden's saying that he never acted for them.

Capital's chairman, Ernest Sha, said the company would "continue to defend the company's business and interests vigorously".

The Gaming Board, which regulates the casinos industry, is looking at the company's affairs following the allegations. Derek Burns, its deputy chief inspector, said the Gaming Board had the right to enter Capital's premises at any time during its gaming hours and inspect documents and computer files.



Marlene Dietrich in *The Blue Angel*, made in 1930, one of the classics Carlton has acquired

Photograph: BFI

Carlton buys movie classics for digital

Cathy Newman

Subscribers to digital terrestrial television will be able to watch classic films by Marlene Dietrich, Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd after Carlton Communications purchased the rights to a film library containing 600 early cinema classics.

The television company has heeded up its film library ahead of next year's launch of 15 digital terrestrial channels, by acquiring the Robauer Film Collection. Carlton and Granada Group jointly own British Digital Broadcasting (BDB), which was awarded the licence to run digital terrestrial at the end of June.

The Robauer library gives Carlton access to vintage films such as *The Thief of Baghdad*, *The Phantom of the Opera* and *The Blue Angel*, starring Marlene Dietrich.

Carlton's programme distribution company, CTE, can now lay claim to being the second

highest exporter of TV programmes and films, behind the BBC.

Michael Green, chairman of Carlton, said digital television was one of the new opportunities for screening classic films. Carlton Films is one of the 15 channels on offer from BDB.

A spokesman for Carlton said yesterday: "As the number of channels grows worldwide, the demand increases. There will always be demand for the vintage classics of cinema, and Carlton is now the market leader in British vintage films."

Carlton indicated that, because of the age of most of the films, the rights had been secured for only a few million dollars.

The deal comes four months after Carlton paid £65m for Rank Film Distributors, Britain's largest independent film library, containing 750 films, including the Carry On movies and modern blockbusters.

IN BRIEF

Mathew Clark bosses toast 51% pay rise

Mathew Clark awarded its directors a 51 per cent pay rise in the same year that the shares plunged by over 60 per cent, according to the troubled oil maker's annual report published yesterday. Peter Aikens, chief executive, enjoyed a rise in his package of 63 per cent last year, with his salary, benefits in kind and pension contributions reaching £327,000. The basic pay and pension contributions of Enderidge, finance director, and business development director Peter Huntley also soared. Andrew Nash was paid over £170,000 compensation for losing his title as managing director of branded drinks. A spokesman said the directors had been underpaid relative to similar companies until last year. The company has since been hit by competition from alcopops.

US stokes European acquisitions boom

American firms were the most active buyers of European companies in the first half of this year as the mergers and acquisitions boom in the area continues, according to *Acquisitions Monthly*. German companies were prolific sellers of businesses while the Netherlands continues to attract buyers, the survey found. During the first six months of 1997, 1,051 cross-border acquisition of companies based in the EU were recorded worth £28.8bn, compared with 982 deals totalling £27bn during the first half of 1996.

WH Smith shareholders approve buy-back

Shareholders in WH Smith yesterday approved the company's plan to buy back up to 28.5 million of its ordinary shares, about 10 per cent of its issued share capital. The company said last month the earliest date it would make share purchases would be after its results statement scheduled for 27 August. WH Smith is still seeking a new chief executive to replace Bill Cockburn but could announce an appointment as early as next month.

Independent subsidiary boosts profits

Australian Provincial Newspapers, the Australian subsidiary of Independent Newspapers, which owns 46 per cent of the publisher of *The Independent*, announced a 16 per cent rise in underlying post-tax profits to A\$12.6m (£5.8m) for the six months to June thanks to a rise in earnings from its Australian Radio Network subsidiary. It said the group had performed well despite difficult trading conditions and was well positioned to continue to grow profits.

Barclays spends £14m buying Barclays

Barclays has spent £13.8m buying back 1 million of its ordinary shares. The bank said at its interim results earlier this month that it planned to spend £700m on share buy-backs, and has now spent more than £300m. The shares rose 11p to 1393.5p.

Hamlet in administration with £40m debt

Clothing supplier and retailer Hamlet Group went into administration yesterday with debts of £40m. Chris Hughes and Chris Barlow of Coopers & Lybrand and Keith Goodman of Leonard Curtis were appointed joint administrators.

Buoyant Iliion bucks strong pound

Iliion, the computer network company formerly called Persona, announced a 28 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £4.03m on turnover up 36 per cent to £88.4m despite the strength of sterling, thanks to expansion into continental Europe and its £4.1m acquisition of Microware International Marketing, a German software distributor.

Bayer improves to DM1.7bn

Bayer, the German pharmaceuticals giant, announced strong growth in first-half figures yesterday with group profit rising by 13 per cent to DM1.7bn (£580m), and cashflow by 18 per cent to DM3.2bn on sales of DM 2.6bn.

Home Office

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166 MMX Intel 166MHz Pentium processor with MMX technology
32MB EDO RAM
4.3Gb IDE hard disk
32.9 Voice Modem
15 MB CD-ROM drive
15-40T sound
64-bit Graphics using SWS & MPEG
FREE Laser Printer (selected offer)
All standard features below

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200+

200+ MMX Intel 200MHz Pentium processor with MMX technology
32MB EDO RAM
4.3Gb IDE hard disk
32.9 Voice Modem
24 MB CD-ROM drive
32.9 Voice Modem
64-bit Graphics using SWS & MPEG
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- 14" SVGA 15.40T colour screen (15" models 100)
- 100% keyboard, PS/2 mouse and 3.5" 1.44Mb floppy drive
- Advanced multi-tasking with all standard ports and your 2000 computer, BIOS
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There are still some winners in IT

Here's a simple question. Should investors be buying information technology stocks at the moment? A quick glance at the share price performance and ratings of many computer service companies suggests not.

Most are on sky-high valuations, driven by growing demand for computer re-programming to solve the millennium problem and prepare for monetary union and a general explosion in the use of IT. Shares in Parity, which reported interim results yesterday, have outperformed the All-Share by 230 per cent over the last three years. The shares up another 39.5p to 531.5p yesterday after the company reported a 32 per cent rise in profits for the six months to June, standing on a heady 26 times forward earnings, according to forecasts from Tim Steer at Merrill Lynch.

So after such a good run, should investors be taking profits in the computer services and IT sector? The answer is no, not if you choose your company carefully. That is part of the problem. Computer service companies are a surprisingly diverse lot. They include software and hardware providers, like Micro Focus. IT outsourcing like Sema. FI and Logica. IT staff agencies like Delphi. Parity and CRT and trainers and consultants like Admiral, Logica and Parity.

As a general guide, those IT companies most likely to reward investors are those involved in people-related computer services - IT agencies, trainers and outsourcing - rather than software or hardware providers. The Howay Report, the IT watchers' bible, forecasts that the market for IT training will grow by an average 19 per cent a year to 2000 against a 4 per cent decline in the software providers market.

Some IT stocks will face pressure. Staff turnover at an average 25 per cent and wage inflation at 30 per cent for the most skilled IT staff will undoubtedly squeeze margins. The shortage of IT staff is also a critical issue. Those companies like Parity which have access to large pools of contract staff are likely to fare better than companies like Logica, with a large fixed staff base. Margins will also suffer as customers start demanding lower contract prices in return for longer, more secure contracts and higher volumes. The winners will be companies like Parity which swap to small customers, which lack their own IT support and are therefore prepared to pay for help.

However the doomsters who predict that there will be a sharp fall-off of work after the year 2000 are undoubtedly wrong. Richard Howay reckons the outsourcing of Internet and Intranet services - where IT companies write and manage web pages for their customers - has barely begun. Other

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY SAMEENA AHMAD

growth areas are communication, data warehouses and legacy systems. Rather than be put off by high valuations, investors should look for IT companies - like Sema, Parity, FI and Mays - best placed to keep growing.

Brown & Jackson buys opposition

Brown & Jackson, the discount retailer which was on the brink of collapse three years ago, appears to be moving towards a more aggressive phase that might, just might, offer some hope to its weary shareholders.

Now controlled by the South African Pepkor Group, the Poundstretcher retailer, which could hardly afford one of its own loaves a couple of years back, is actually making an acquisition.

It is paying Pepkor £7.65m for the Your More Store chain of 137 discount stores. These have been competing with B&J's Poundstretchers and were built up by Johan Visser, who was appointed chief executive of Brown & Jackson in March.

The deal will be funded by the issue of more shares at an expected price of 16.5p, compared to yesterday's close of 17p, up 0.5p.

Through Your More Stores is also a discount store, there are several differences. First, it actually makes money - £750,000 last year on sales of £34.7m. Second, its stores are smaller and do not offer product lines such as toiletries and confectionery which are available in Poundstretchers.

The reasons for the deal are to inject profits into Poundstretcher, to enable in-filling in smaller towns and to achieve better synergies in areas such as buying. Some costs may be stripped out though Mr Visser says the rationale for the deal is buying power more than cost-cutting.

Certainly, taking over your most obvious competitor is a logical way of making headway in a cut-throat and mature market and Brown & Jackson certainly needs a boost.

Yesterday's figures showed reduced losses of £2.7m in the year to June though it did turn in an operating profit of £0.5m compared to the previous year's £3.1m loss.

More worrying is the sales line, where like-for-like sales were only 1 per cent ahead last year. Though current

trading is better it is clear that the discount market is not a happy place to be at the moment.

On the positive side, Pepkor has made widespread management changes, with five directors leaving the board in the past year. On forecasts of £1m profit this year, after several years of losses, Brown & Jackson's shares trade on a forward rating of 21. As ever, one for the brave.

Stoves' springtime drop 'just a blip'

Stoves, the specialist kitchen stove makers, yesterday confirmed a springtime drop in sales which they blamed on consumer nerves ahead of the general election.

Sales in the fourth quarter of the year to the end of May were little higher than at the same time in 1996 after running 30 per cent ahead in the first three quarters.

But the company still increased turnover for the full year by 27 per cent to £80m, while pre-tax profits rose 21 per cent to £5.2m, bang in line with forecasts from Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, the house broker.

The tax charge rose from 18 per cent to 32 per cent as previous tax losses were finally used up, cutting earnings per share to 13.5p, but this too was anticipated.

It was the eighth successive year of growth and the spring downturn is now confirmed as a blip.

Sales of cookers traditionally rise when the housing market is strong, and the company has little exposure to the effects of a strong pound.

New products in the pipeline include a rotary gas burner that will combine the moistness of gas cooking with the even heat of a fan-assisted oven, while sales to export markets in Germany and the Netherlands are beginning to build up.

A new distributor has just been signed to handle the 30 per cent of deliveries which go direct to purchasers' homes.

That should help control distribution costs, which rose 54 per cent to £7.3m last year.

The current year's capital spending should be no higher than the past year's £4.4m, and analysts are hopeful that profits will resume their upward march to £7.2m, equal to 19p a share.

But the shares, which peaked at 530p in February, still reflect the springtime setback.

They gained just 1p to 268.5p yesterday, only 14 times forecast earnings. That looks like a buying opportunity.

Sir Teddy turns to the bottle at holiday time

PEOPLE & BUSINESS



Sir Teddy Taylor: One of the MPs featured in Virgin survey

"Empty pockets every night into a large bottle. The result can be put towards a family holiday," advises Tory stalwart Sir Teddy Taylor. This is just one favourite money-saving tip revealed by a clutch of top MPs to Virgin Direct, in what Richard Branson's company last week describes as its "Questions of Cash" survey.

Alan Clarke of "Diaries" fame recommends "never writing a cheque" while fellow Tory Michael Bates suggests "hiding the wife's credit card".

The Labour suggestions are a lot more politically correct but most of them are by MPs I've never heard of. Nicholas Palmer, member for Broxtowe, suggests "avoiding politics".

Steve Pound (Ealing North) urges you to cut down on "beer and lags" while Lindsay Hoyle (Chorley) simply says: "Deep pockets, short arms."

As for the Lib Dems, Andrew Sanders (Torquay) declares: "Don't buy shaving foam, use soap instead."

Virgin claims the results of the poll of 51 MPs show clearly that they prefer direct distribution of financial products: 41 per cent of those polled opted to buy direct from the company. Our political leaders seem to be a pretty well covered lot; over two-thirds have a personal pension, 47 per cent hold a PEP and 37 per cent invest in TESSAs.

Last but not least, 73 per cent of the MPs polled admitted they were still learning about money management. What this says about the future prosperity of this country I'm not sure.

It must be fun being a risk manager for a large company. Every other October you get the chance to attend the Monte Carlo Risk Management Forum, three days of lectures and lunches. This year insurance brokers Sedgwick are making the occasion even more enjoyable by sponsoring the City of London Sinfonia (CLS).

On Tuesday 7 October the Orchestra will play for the first time in the principality with a concert including pieces by Tchaikovsky, Cam-

pra and Vivaldi. Which is all fine and dandy, but when I think of Monty Carlo I think of casinos. Do any of your delegates ever get the urge to test their risk management theories at the gaming tables? Tony Richards of Sedgwick laughs: "It's been known. The only disincentive is the amount of money you need, I think." Not that Mr Richards has ever been tempted: "I'm risk-averse myself."

Is this another Martin Taylor in the making? Mr Taylor, now chief executive of Barclays Bank, started his career writing for the Lex column on the *Financial Times* before being whisked away by Christopher Hogg to help run Courtaulds.

Now John Kingman, a writer for Lex and a former private secretary to Stephen Dorrell at the Treasury, is being whisked off to work for John Browne, chief executive of BP.

Mr Kingman will work with Nick Butler, BP's group policy adviser, advising on BP's strategy. When I say "whisked", he's got to serve out his three months' notice, of course. Seeing that Mr Taylor wound up at Barclays, perhaps Mr Kingman will succeed Derek Wanless at NatWest - who knows?

It looks as if the search to replace Ray Snoddy as the FT's media guru has ended - the Pink'un's banking expert John Gapper is firm favourite for the job, although he mod-

estly insists that "nothing has been decided yet".

Mr Gapper will write on international stories while a yet-to-be appointed reporter will help out on UK stories. Also, Simon Davies from Lex is going to be the FT's international capital markets editor from 22 September.

You know it's the holiday season when the Global Markets Economics team at Bankers Trust can devote two-and-a-half pages of its European newsletter to a learned article by Flanour de Boukvardier: "Red wine: A blue chip investment?"

The newsletter usually comments on the latest monetary signals from the Bundesbank and the like. I don't recognise Mr Flanour's name either. He obviously knows his stuff, however. Did you know that "in the last four-and-a-half years the BT first growth chart index has risen by nearly 350 per cent, compared to a 64 per cent gain for the Footsie?"

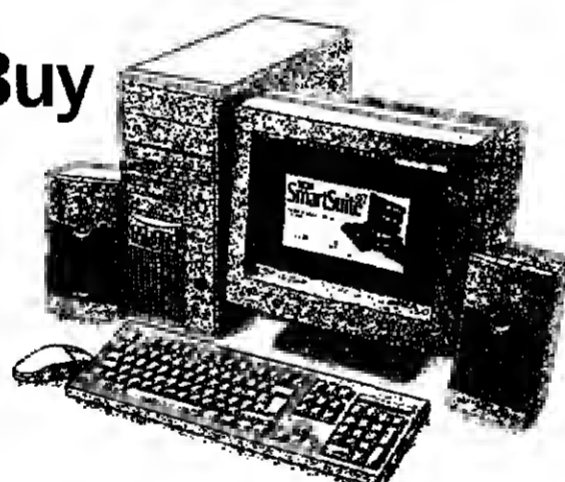
The author analyses why top French wine prices have slumped through the roof in the last five years, so that now you can pay a £100 deposit for a bottle of something that hasn't even been bottled yet. The chief culprit is the juxtaposition of relatively fixed quality wine production and an increase in demand from a richer and more knowledgeable public.

John Willcock

'New MJN Best Buy MMX Systems'

MJN's 200M system based on Intel Pentium 200MHz processor with MMX Technology, large 4.3Gb hard drive, 32Mb RAM, superb 15" screen and 33.6 voice modem is now available at a truly sensational price of just £999 + VAT

The new 200M-2 systems featuring faster IBM MX processor with MMX Technology provides the highest specification with a massive 64Mb RAM, 56K voice modem, 24 max speed CD and latest SIS advanced graphics using 4Mb and 3D WaveTable stereo sound - all from an amazing £1099 + VAT

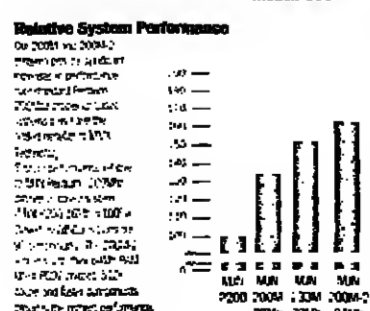


MJN 200M

- Intel Pentium 200MHz processor with MMX™ technology
- 32Mb EDO RAM
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- 18 speed MAX CD-ROM drive
- 33.6 V.34+ voice modem
- 15" SVGA 0.28dp screen
- 256K pipeline burst cache
- 64-bit graphics using 2Mb system RAM
- 16-bit stereo sound
- SoundForce 525 stereo main powered speaker system
- MJN 7 bay mid tower system (not shown)
- Windows 95 and Lotus SmartSuite 97
- Standard features listed below

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- 512K pipeline burst cache
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MJN 200M-2 XL

- 68050MX PR200 processor with MMX™ technology manufactured by IBM
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- 4.3Gb hard disk
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- 56K V.34+ voice modem
- 17" SVGA 0.28dp screen
- 512K pipeline burst cache
- SIS 64-bit advanced graphics using 4Mb system RAM
- 3D stereo sound with WaveTable software
- Executive speaker system with large subwoofer
- MJN advanced ATX mid tower system
- Windows 95 and Lotus SmartSuite 97
- Standard features listed below

£1526.33 Including VAT

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EMI to build Arabian music repertoire

Cathy Newman

EMI, the music giant whose artists include the Spice Girls and the Beatles, is to expand into Egypt as part of plans to increase its presence in the Arab countries.

The company has appointed an agent in Egypt to distribute EMI's international recordings and develop its Arabic repertoire. If all goes according to plan, EMI expects to set up an office in the country.

A spokeswoman for EMI said yesterday: "You have to start somewhere and this is where we start. It's part of our commitment to growing the Arab region."

However, she said the move was at this stage "exploratory" as music piracy in Egypt, where albums are illegally copied,

could present a problem for the group. "The market really does need stronger copyright and piracy legislation," she said.

According to the most recent figures from the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), 25 per cent of all albums sold in Egypt in 1995 were pirated.

However, EMI sees a potential for growth in Egypt, which is the fourth-largest music market in the Arab countries. EMI already has operations in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, the Lebanon and Abu Dhabi.

The Middle East and Turkish region represented only 1 per cent of world music sales last year, but grew 15 per cent during the period, IFPI figures showed. Sales of CDs in the area increased by 39 per cent in 1996.

EMI has recently looked at expanding into developing markets such as Asia and Latin America. EMI and its rival, PolyGram, are keen to develop their local repertoires in these areas, as the fragmentation of the global music market makes it more difficult to export international artists across the world. PolyGram recently expressed an interest in moving into Vietnam.

EMI said yesterday that local stars were also in vogue for cultural reasons. "As countries develop and become more affluent, they buy artists who sing about their own culture," the spokeswoman said.

"Local repertoire is the way things are going as indigenous music is more identifiable to individual consumers."

Watmoughs chief quits after dive

Clifford German

Declan Salter, chief executive of Watmoughs, the printing group, yesterday resigned after less than eight months in the job. He had said the price for the buy-in to Watmoughs' share price since his appointment, after the group posted disappointing results for 1996 and two profit warnings this summer. He leaves with a redundancy package worth an estimated £200,000, representing a year's salary.

Patrick Walker, Watmoughs' 65-year-old chairman, will return as chief executive, having only recently handed over the reins to Mr Salter after grooming him for the job since 1994.

He intends to stay as chief executive for another two years, but will hand on the chairmanship to Sir Derek Birkin in November, two months ahead of schedule.

The board blames the strong pound, erratic paper prices and price-cutting by continental competitors for the setback.

The shares, which fell from 450p in February to just 178p last month, rebounded 4.5p to 206p yesterday.

Restaurant boss resigns for buyout

Cathy Newman

Break for the Border, the themed restaurants group, is to sell its music and theatre interests, which include the Brixton Academy and the Shepherd's Bush Empire.

Ian Howard, chief executive and one of the founders of the business, has expressed an interest in buying the music and theatre divisions.

He has resigned as chief executive to put together a bid, although he will remain a non-executive director.

Break for the Border will now focus on expanding its bars and restaurants. One of its themed restaurants will open shortly in Leeds and further

openings are planned within the year. The company said the division being sold was not as profitable as its bars and restaurants business.

Mr Howard has a background in the music business, and founded the company's Borderline clubs, which play live music at venues in Charing Cross and Oxford Circus.

He has been replaced by Roger Beaumont, group operations director. A new non-executive director will be appointed shortly.

For the year to the end of March, bars and restaurants reported turnover of £14.27m, compared to turnover of £6.88m in the music and theatre division.

Company Results				
	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Bar & Border (p)	12.45m (3.3m)	482,000 (116,000)	3.01p (0.75p)	0.8p (0.3p)
Borderline Clubs (p)	11.01m (3.87m)	885,000 (901,000)	1.31p (1.15p)	1.1p (0.9p)
Break for the Border (p)	66.7m (83.1m)	2.8m (2.4m)	0.0p (0.7p)	
Future Integrated (p)	4.9m (3.61m)	550,000 (296,000)	5.42p (3.38p)	
Other Group (p)	81.33m (65.18m)	4.02m (3.15m)	7.1p (6p)	2p (1.7p)
Parity (p)	30.62m (76.36m)	5.7m (4.3m)	8.2p (6.75p)	1.8p (1.4p)
Party Group (p)	229.7m (233.3m)	4.9m (4.1m)	1.5p (1.1p)	3.45p (2.55p)
Pink Holdings (p)	44.2m (41.78m)	3.83m (3.13m)	21.5p (17.5p)	6.0p (6.45p)
Stevens (p)	80.2m (63m)	5.2m (4.2m)	13.9p (14.2p)	5.5p
(p) Final (q) Interim (m) Nine Months				

Kenwood remains in Pifco's sights

Sameena Ahmad

Pifco, the Carmen hair-rollers to Russell Hobbs kettle group, said yesterday that it was still considering launching a hostile bid for Kenwood, the larger electrical goods group, after its friendly advances were rebuffed earlier this year.

Michael Webber, chairman of Pifco, said yesterday: "We haven't ruled out anything. We still believe in the industrial logic of merging with Kenwood. We haven't said whether we would go hostile or not."

Pifco reported a 23 per cent rise pre-tax profits to £3.8m for the year to April. Mr Webber said the company, which has £7.5m net cash and no gearing, had "substantial" bank borrowing facilities to fund an acquisition and would consider issuing paper.

He added that Pifco, which has been under pressure to make an acquisition and has been stalking Kenwood for two years, was also considering three other potential targets including a large appliance maker on the Continent.

Mr Webber confirmed analysts' views that Pifco was waiting for the next profit warning from Kenwood before making a move.

"It's all very well to feel exasperated and frustrated, but life is about patience and timing. We are hiding our time," said Mr Webber. "You must remember that our original offer was never put to Kenwood's shareholders."

Kenwood's shares have slumped from 400p three years ago to 115p, though renewed bid hopes yesterday sent them 11.5p higher, valuing the company at £53m against Pifco's current market capitalisation of £35m. Pressure from dissident shareholders led to the departure of Tim Beech as Kenwood's chief executive in February.

Pifco's results were themselves upbeat. A strong performance from the group's Russell Hobbs Millennium kettle range, which boils water faster than any other kettle and does not fur up, drove the profits increase.

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Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	1.8063	0.8959	Nigeria	132.083	62.8920
Australia	1.5005	0.7252	Oman	0.8767	0.4795
Brazil	1.7302	1.0294	Pakistan	85.6344	30.4000
Canada	1.3171	0.7280	Peru	105.350	105.3500
Chile	5.4357	3.3576	Portugal	299.315	3.6416
Egypt	8.6367	5.4585	Spain	904.811	693.500
Finland	3.5342	2.2270	Taiwan	4.7521	4.7000
France	6.5620	3.9000	South Africa	26.7378	26.7378
Germany	4.3643	2.7020	Thailand	5.9375	3.6733
India	0.4603	0.3592	UAE		

Source: Reuters. Figures quoted in U.S. dollars or in U.S. dollars and cents. Figures in parentheses are in U.S. dollars.

Tourist Rates

C Ruys	C Ruys	C Ruys
Australia/Dubai	France (France)	New Zealand/Dubai
Australia/Wellington	Germany (Munich)	New York (New York)
Belgium/France	Greece/Athens	Panama/Panama
Canada/Dubai	Hong Kong (Hong Kong)	Perth/Perth
Canada/Paris	India (Mumbai)	San Francisco/San Francisco
Canada/Toronto	Italy (Rome)	Turkey/Turkey
Canada/Vancouver	Japan (Tokyo)	

Interest Rates

UK Base	7.00%	Germany Discount	2.50%	US Prime	8.50%	Japan Discount	0.50%
France		London	4.50%	Discount	5.00%	Belgian	
Intervention bid	3.10%	Canada		Feed Funds	3.50%	Swiss	2.50%
Discount		France	4.75%	Special		Central	3.00%
Netherlands	0.25%	Discount	2.98%	10-Day Repo	5.25%	Swissland	
		Denmark		Repo (6m)		Discount	1.00%
		Sweden	3.25%	Repo (3m)	4.10%	London	re 5%

Country	5-yr	Yield	10-yr	yield	Country	5-yr	Yield	10-yr	yield
UK	7.00%	7.00	7.25%	7.00	Holland	8.25%	8.44	5.75%	5.52
US	6.50%	6.05	6.25	6.21	France	7.50%	5.53	7.75%	6.25
Japan	6.50%	1.25	6.00%	2.27	Italy	6.50%	6.25	8.75%	6.25
Canada	10.00%	6.11	6.75%	6.51	Belgium	6.00%	4.80	6.25%	5.57
Australia	8.00%	4.79	6.00%	5.58	Sweden	10.00%	6.50	6.25%	5.57
Germany	8.00%	4.79	6.00%	5.58	ECU	6.00%	5.58	5.50%	5.92
France	4.75%	4.17	5.50%	5.40					

Source: HSBC Markets Research

Yields calculated on bank bills. -- Denotes new benchmark

	O/Night	7 Day	7 month	3 month	7 ¹ / ₂ month	7 ¹ / ₂ month	7 ¹ / ₂ month	7 ¹ / ₂ month
Interbank	8 1/4	7 1/4	7 1/4	6 1/4	7 1/4	7 1/4	7 1/4	7 1/4
Starting CDs	8 1/4	8 1/4	8 1/4	8 1/4	7 1/4	7 1/4	7 1/4	7 1/4
Local Authority Depos	8 1/4	8 1/4	8 1/4	8 1/4	7 1/4	7 1/4	7 1/4	7 1/4
Discount Market Depos	8 1/4	8 1/4	8 1/4	8 1/4	7 1/4	7 1/4	7 1/4	7 1/4
Treasury Bills (Buy)			5 1/2	5 1/2	5 1/2	5 1/2	5 1/2	5 1/2
Offshore CDs			5 1/2	5 1/2	5 1/2	5 1/2	5 1/2	5 1/2
ECU Linked Dep			5 1/2	5 1/2	5 1/2	5 1/2	5 1/2	5 1/2

Contract		open interest	price	change for day	traded	interest
Long Gold	Sept 87	115,022	115.07	114.47	48130	167,168
German Gov Bond	Sept 87	14,108	141.00	141.00	14,108	14,108
Japan Gov Bond	Sept 87	136,116	136.35	136.25	58226	100,771
Italian Gov Bond	Sept 87	127,115	127.20	127.10	58,226	100,771
3 Mth Eurodollar	Dec 87	62,611	92.84	92.84	8838	125,276
3 Mth Eurodollar	Dec 87	62,611	92.84	92.84	15,837	125,276
3 Mth Eurodollar	Dec 87	62,611	92.84	92.84	43,500	290,453
3 Mth Eurodollar	Dec 87	62,611	92.84	92.84	79,221	290,453
3 Mth Eurodollar	Dec 87	62,611	92.84	92.84	21,396	121,514
3 Mth Eurodollar	Dec 87	62,611	92.84	92.84	69,888	69,888
3 Mth Eurodollar	Dec 87	62,611	92.84	92.84	69,888	69,888
3 Mth EDU	Dec 87	85,57	85.57	85.53	46,100	10,735
3 Mth EDU	Dec 87	85,57	85.57	85.53	98,390	10,735
FTSE 100	Sept 87	4844.0	4844.0	4844.0	5000	7374

Settlement price: 4917	closing offer price				Cash Put
Series	4650	4900	4980	5000	Total/yr
Sep	177/81	177/101	117/124	92/152	--
Oct	226/114	179/135	167/158	132/184	--
Nov	278/145	248/166	219/187	189/210	--
Dec	319/161	268/181	256/202	225/225	110/161

INDUSTRIAL METALS - London Metal Exchange					
Shipment	Contract	Unit	Volume	LME Stocks	chg
Aluminum July	171675.0	1000000.0	11910	526075	+ 425
Aluminum Aug	140450.0	1000000.0	1195	540	123
Copper Aug	21145.0	25145.0	42566	20875	+ 675
Lead	5185.0	10000.0	5940	10400	375
Nickel	10500.0	10000.0	26274	20025	125
Zinc	53050.0	30000.0	10725	10000	123
Yr	1625.0	30.0	4138	31855	5725
Southwest Commodity	0.0	3000	50		
Chicago Index	1.0	1.2500	110.10		

Stock Volume & Change at
closes as at Tue 10:15 AM

PRECIOUS METALS	
-----------------	--

Pelliculum	198.00	123.00	Britannia.5 oz	185	121	Sous	75-1C	47.54
Silver spot	4.6135	2.8065	Britannia.25 oz	69	55	Mobles	417-633	352.260
Gold Bath	323.45	201.40	Britannia.10 gr	33	24	Maple Leaf	323-353	204.219

Source: Spahr & Son

AGRICULTURAL

Dec	1062	Sep	1530	Sep	1625	Nov	62.00	Vol	54	
Mar	1077	Nov	1530	Nov	62.25	Mar	108.00	Vol	54	23.00
Mar	7723	Vol	5075	Vol	20	Apr	125.00	Apr	54	23.00
White Sugar		Freight		Wholesale		Com	54	Vol	541	
LIFFE	Diamond	LIFFE Shroderbank	LIFFE	Diamond	CBOT	1250 Prices				
Aug	326.40	Aug	1310	Oct	83.50	H-Lu				
Dec	323.70	Aug	1310	Nov	86.50	Dec	276.00-281.75	Nov	281.50	
Mar	326.00	Vol	29	Jan	90.00	Dec	277.75-284.50	Dec	282.50	
Vol	2308	Index	1293	Jan	861	Nov	286.00-272.50	Nov	278.50	

Sep/Oct	Copra (t)	\$/tonne	109.00	Sep/Oct	Coconut Oil (t)	\$/tonne	655.00
Sep/Oct	Castor (MT)	\$/tonne	73.45	Oct/Dec	Burlesque Oil	\$/tonne	540.00
unq	Wool	Acs/mtg	unq	Sep/Oct	Reprocessed Oil	FL/100kg	108.00
Sep	Rubber*	/Monthing	232.00	Aug/Sep	Grownout Oil	\$/tonne	1085.00

*Official Statistics - many origin; * Philippine domestic statistics; ** Europe Sources; PT Information/Holland

ENERGY						
Brutal Crude						
	(\$/barrel)	Gasoil	(\$/tonne)	WTI	Products ↑	(\$/tonne)

Nov	18.22	+0.27	Oct	173.75	+2.25	Nov	20.55	Naphtha	182/182
Dec	18.33	+0.23	Nov	175.50	+2.25	Dec	20.60	EC Gasoil	172/173
Vol.	19346	Index	10.89	Vol.	9134	Jan	20.55	Fuel Oil	91/93

*Since 9.30pm previous day Year ago prices above Average for week. Source: IGIS-London Oil Reports Prices

Agricultural	1963=100	182.95	-0.67	215.95	-10.55	201.35	-4.39
Energy	1970=100	225.45	+0.24	239.29	+1.85	205.10	-11.51
Industry	1963=100	70.50	-0.69	85.86	-18.08	72.11	-2.05
Manufacturing	1977=100	165.25	-1.58	198.79	+15.67	155.54	+12.05
Utilities	1970=100	198.08	-1.97	191.38	-1.02	200.92	5.61
Private Metals	1973=100	417.19	-1.32	465.54	-1.02	492.71	-15.28

Source: Goldreau, Sachs & Co. *GSCI is a trademark and servicemark of Goldreau, Sachs & Co.

*Close as of 10 Aug 87

Stock	Bid	Mid	Offer	Stock	Bid	Mid	Offer
Abbey Equity Ser 4	300.8		316.7	Legal & General Insurance Assn			
Abbey International Ser 4	341.0		354.6	London & Manchester Fire Ins Co	1100.4		1181.0
Abbey International Ser 5	364.0		374.0	London Equity			
Abbey Malcom International	188.0		193.0	London Ind			
Abbey National UK Equity	772.0		787.0	London Ind			
Abbey Equity Acc-Std 1	2120.1		2241.1	London Ind			
Abbey National UK Ser 30	1394.0		1442.0	M & G Insurance Bond Acc	1171.0		1188.7
Allied Dunlop Distribution Bnd	77.0		78.0	M & G Recovery	919.0		930.0
Allied Dunlop Equity Acc	1990.0		2046.6	Manchest Insurance Managed			
				Midland Finance	100.0		108.9

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Commercial Union Mortgage	351.5	Scottish Equitable Home	349.2	281.3	
Commercial Union UK Equity	696.7	733.3	Life Mortgage	367.7	281.3
Commercial Union With Profit	142.4	140.8	Scottish Widows	294.6	257.7
Equity Share Mortgage	732.3	226.7	Scott Pure Invest With Profit	188.5	149.6
First Step Homeplus	144.8	134.56	Scottish Widows International	627.5	541.6
Friends Provident Mortgage	414.3	495.2	Scottish Widows Invest	629.3	541.6
Friends Provident UK Equity	576.1	617.3	Scottish Widows Life	147.1	133.5
Friends Provident With Profit	217.5	228.2	Scottish Widows Lifeplus	222.7	177.7
Friends Provident With Profit	185.9	179.1	Standard Life	347.1	281.3
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UNIT TRUST GUIDE

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exit charge applies
when units are sold
formerly 'offer'
formerly 'bid'
Non SIB recognised funds

هكذا من الاصل

YORK EBOR MEETING: A front-runner quick from the draw can hold off last year's winning team in the week's big handicap

Bimsey to defy Purist for punters

GREG WOOD

There are many delights to take in the big August meeting at York, not the least of them the fact that, while there may be half a dozen past and future Classic winners racing on the Knavesmire this week, the event which will pack the terraces like no other is a handicap. The snobs may not like it, but at its heart, this is a meeting for the punters.

And punters will be shortly after three o'clock today, in sums large enough to ensure a bleak autumn for the local economy if an outsider leads the field home in the race which gives the entire week its name. Twenty-two runners will go to post for the richest Flat handicap anywhere in Europe, and the winner will earn every penny of the £100,000 first prize.

And if it is a gruelling race for the runners, it is little better for the backers attempting to sort it out. Just one clear favourite has obliged them in the last 14 years, and while Puce is close behind him in the ante-post betting, the unwelcome task of ending that dismal run will probably fall to Media Star this afternoon.

John Gosden's runner could hardly be better named, given that both the trainer and his jockey, Frankie Dettori, are among the most amenable interviewees on the turf. After Dettori's excellent start to the meeting, his supporters will be doubly encouraged to note that the removal of Kutta from the top of the weights should mean that Dettori will not put up any over-weight on the favourite.

While the betting fates can give, so can they take away, and any advantage conferred on Media Star by the rising weights is more than cancelled out by his high draw. There are those who do not believe that the draw can influence a 14-furlong race, but with the exception of Sammartino two years ago, a single-figure stall has been all but a prerequisite for success in the last decade, a trend which is too pronounced to be coincidence.

And it is not just Media Star who must overcome a wide starting position. Both Puce and Mithawk River, the next two names in most bookies' lists, are similarly inconvenienced, a particular irritation in the case

of the former since she would otherwise have been a confident selection to reverse recent Woodward form with Media Star. The only sensible option, though, is to play the percentages and stick to the low numbers, where the choice lies between Bimsey and Purist.

Purist represents last year's winning combination of Michael Stoute and Fergal Lynch, but comes into the race with just a maiden in his credit, and may lack the necessary experience.

BIMSEY (next best 3.10), by contrast, is a familiar figure, particularly to National Hunt enthusiasts, and while he has not reproduced his excellent hurdling form on the Flat so far this

year, he has not yet been allowed to make the running, as he does so successfully over the sticks. You could wish to have no sharper trainer on your side in a big handicap than Reg Akehurst, and from his low draw, Bimsey can seize the initiative.

Henry Cecil's Ebore meeting did not begin as planned yesterday with Bossa Mann finishing last, but it is difficult to see a similar mishap befalling Reams Of Verse (2.35), the Oaks winner, in the Yorkshire Oaks. Many will anticipate a double for Cecil, who saddles Bold Fact in the Gimcrack Stakes, and the July Stakes winner holds every chance if he can run in a straight line from his stands' rail stall. He is, though, a straightforward ride, and Social Charter (3.45), a week winner at Salisbury last week, should be the one to benefit.

A better chance of making money comes with Amys (next best 2.05), who did not receive the best of rides from Michael Hills last time. He is not one to make the same mistake twice.

The runners in the third race at Folkestone yesterday had a narrow escape when a car came on the track in front of them during the race. A course attendant removed some running to allow the car to drive off the course just in time.

Yesterday's results, page 22

HYPERION

2.05 Amys
2.35 My Emma
3.10 Colour Code
3.45 Carrowkeel

GOSDEN: Good to Firm (in places).
DRIFT ADVANTAGE: Low for 1m 400m. The horse has been in the form of the last few weeks, but is not one to make the same mistake twice.

LEADING TRAINERS: H. Cecil 27 winners from 100 runners gives a success rate of 27.0%.
LEADING JOCKEYS: H. Cecil 44 wins from 194 rides gives a success rate of 22.7%.
WINDERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS: H. Cecil 44 wins from 194 rides gives a success rate of 22.7%.

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GOSDEN: Good to Firm (in places).
DRIFT ADVANTAGE: Low for 1m 400m. The horse has been in the form of the last few weeks, but is not one to make the same mistake twice.

LEADING TRAINERS: H. Cecil 27 winners from 100 runners gives a success rate of 27.0%.
LEADING JOCKEYS: H. Cecil 44 wins from 194 rides gives a success rate of 22.7%.

WINDERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS: H. Cecil 44 wins from 194 rides gives a success rate of 22.7%.

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Year	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th



Photographs: Empics/Allsport

div

15 Matthew Pini (Australia)
14 Jim Fallon (England)
13 Allan Bateman (Wales)
12 Steve Cottrell (New Zealand)
11 Jason Wright (New Zealand)
10 Adrian Davies (Wales)
9 Augustin Pichot (Argentina)
1 Darren Crompton (England)
2 Barry Williams (Wales)
3 John Davies (Wales)
4 Craig Quinnett (Wales)
5 Richard West (England)
6 Ben Clarke (England)
8 Scott Quinnett (Wales)
7 Rolando Martin (Argentina)

A good question, getting better by the day. No matter how many points the spectacularly accom-

On average, the 12 top-flight clubs will probably field seven imports, although as far as the England for the English brigade is concerned, some are far more culpable than others. Newly promoted Richmond will be the Little Englanders' No 1 bogey club, for now that Matthew Pinf. Jason Wright, Augustin Pichot, Rolando Martin, Burgess Williams and John Davies – for the record, an Australian, a New Zealander, two Argentinians and a

Leicester, who spent the first half of last season fielding 15 Englishmen and winning plaudits for their stance from those of protestolst persuasion, have now learned the words to "The Internationale" and headhunted two Fifians and a second Springbok to keep Joel Stransky company. Gloucester, of all people, could well field a threequarter line consisting of the French Saint-André brothers, Richie Tombs, of Australia, and Terry Fanolua, from Western Samoa - something that reality will take some believing among the tough nuts of Matson and Coney Hill, who regard the Forest of Dean as the 10th planet of the solar system.

An early glance at the squad lists

Far from expressing alarm at clutter, rugby's worldwide draft fraction, the bright-eyed and businesslike Premiership administrators from the English Rugby Partnership talk breathlessly of bums on seats and bigger, better bank balances. They believe, openly and unashamedly, that the selling of their "product" to a new generation of spectators must take precedence over the sensibilities of the traditional "never mind the ball, get on with the game" rank and file.

And by and large, the players are buying into that philosophy. "Yes we're

"Personally speaking, I have no problem with captaining a side drawn from so many different points of the compass. We're all working towards a common goal, all want to achieve something as a side and for the club. Where I do have a problem is with clubs who show no interest in developing their own talent but merely feed off others. At Richmond we have an enormous mini rugby section - 90 players at under-

Sound sentiments from a sound rugby man, but whether Clarke can persuade his old mentor, Jack Rowell, of the lasting benefits of a melting pot Premiership is open to debate. Wheo an England coach goes looking for a new outside-half or hooker and finds eight of the 12 on view hail from the high veldt or the pampas rather than Ealing Broadway or the Somerset levels, global village virtues tend to lose their lustre.

OVERSEAS AT

- 15 V Serevi (Leicester/Fiji)
- 14 P Saint-André (Gloucester/Fr)
- 13 P Sella (Saracens/Fr)
- 12 G Rees (Wasps/Can)
- 11 V Tuigamala (Newcastle/NZ)
- 10 J Stransky (Leicester/SA)
- 9 A Pichot (Richmond/Arg)
- 1 L Bezeczech (Harlequins/Fr)
- 2 F Mendez (Bath/Arg)
- 3 M Cuttitta (Harlequins/It)
- 4 F van Heerden (Leicester/SA)
- 5 G Llanes (Bath/Arg)
- 6 F Pienaar (Saracens/SA)
- 8 D Lyle (Bath/US)
- 7 R Martin (Richmond/Arg)

Cricket

Mike has done a tremendous job for Derbyshire and I have learned a lot from him."

Swimming

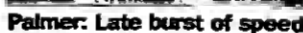
JAMES PARRACK
reports from Seville

Playing Friday: Manchester City v Tranmere
Flowers. **Playing Sunday:** West Bromwich
v Wolves.

thorpe, Playing Friday: Colchester v
Barnet, Scarborough v Brighton.

ham, Queen's Park Rangers, Fulham, Watford, Leyton Orient, Rangers, Ayr, Dundee.

2. Mittek 10-1; 3. Liffre 7-2. 12 ran. 11-4



£4.40, £1.20, £7.30. Dual Forecast: £16.30.
Computer Straight Forecast: £21.32. Tho.
£254.20.

Equestrianism

GENEVIEVE MURPHY

Placepot: £28.30, Quadpot: £7.10,
Place 6: £49.98, Place 5: £15.20.

the Women's Hockey Association and helped establish the National Stadium at Milton Keynes.

Hockey

the Women's Hockey Association and helped establish the National Stadium at Milton Keynes.

FA Garding Premiers

1 Blackburn v Liverpool
2 Coventry v Bolton
3 Everton v West Ham
4 Leeds v Crystal Palace
5 Leicester v Manchester United
6 Newcastle v Aston Villa
7 Southampton v Arsenal
8 Tottenham v Derby
9 Wimbledon v Sheffield Wednesday
Playing Sunday: Barnsley v Charlton
Nationwide Football League First Division
10 Birmingham v Reading
11 Bradford v Ipswich
12 Bury v Charlton
13 Middlesbrough v Stoke
14 Norwich v Crewe
15 Qudor v Nottingham Forest
16 Port Vale v Sunderland
17 QPR v Stockport
18 Sheffield United v Portsmouth
19 Swindon v Huddersfield
Playing Friday: Manchester City v Wolves
Playing Sunday: West Brom v Wolves

POOLS FORECAST

Second Division

X	20 Blackpool v Wycombe	1
1	21 Bristol Rovers v Carlisle	X
2	22 Chesterfield v Walsall	1
1	23 Fulham v Notts County	1
2	24 Gillingham v Walsall	X
1	25 Grimsby v York	1
2	26 Millwall v Walsall	1
1	27 Northampton v Bristol City	2
2	28 Oldham v Bournemouth	1
1	29 Southend v Burnley	2
2	30 Watford v Brentford	1
1	31 Wigan v Plymouth	1

Third Division

1	32 Chester v Cambridge	2
2	33 Exeter v Darlington	1
1	34 Leyton Orient v Rochdale	1
2	35 Luton v Darlington	X
1	36 Mansfield v Cardiff	1
2	37 Notts County v Lincoln	2
1	38 Peterborough v Hull	2
X	39 Rotherham v Hartlepool	2

Also playing (not on coupon): Shrewsbury v Torquay Utd, Swanssea City v Southampton, Plymouth v Friday, Colchester v Barnet, Scarborough v Grimsby.

[illegible]

YORK

2.05: 1. **SARATOGA SP.**
9-1: dead-heat 2. **Chester**
dead-heat 3. **Mutawwaj** 7
heat. (A.P.O'Brien, Inc. Totter)
Chester House £12.00, Mutawwaj
Chester: Saratoga Springs
£17.50, Saratoga Springs
Computer Straight Forecast:
Chester House £11.44, Saratoga
mutawwaj £33.39, Totter £21.1.

2.35: 1. **DOUBLE CLOUT**
5-2.1 Saratoga 9-1: 3. **W.**
6 ran. 2.1 **For Coleridge** (W. H.
stom, Middleborough). Totter:
£22.60, Dual Forecast £11
Straight Forecast: £21.07.

3.10: 1. **SINGSPIEL** (J.
Desert King 6-1: 3. **Benny**
ran. 4-5 **Ben Bossa** (Sham (A
Source, Newmarket). Totter:
£5.00, Computer £50.82.

3.45: 1. **STOWAWAY** (J.
5-1 **Patrician** (15-5)
4-1 5 ran. 7. 1%: **Desert**
marked. Totter: £2.20, £1.
Forecast: £1.50, Computer
£3.72.

4.15: 1. **SALSAUTO BA**
2. **Mittek** 10-1: 3. **Limf** 7

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(M) (Ninane)
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 00.0; £2.40,
 £2.00, Duo
 Eastern House
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 Spring, 19
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 (M Roberts)
 Castle 5-1
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 00; £1.80
 Computer
 on) 4-1; 2,
 Dip 2-4
 1/4, 1/4, (M
 Duo Fore-
 on) 6-5 fav;
 Eastern House
 00, Near-
 1.20, Duo
 1st Fore-
 on) 10-1;
 2 rms. 11-4

RESULTS

1. **Y. (Baling, Kingstons).**
 2.20, £3.30, £1.60. Dual
 Computer Straight Forecast:
 £392.58. Tmo: £62.40.

Y. D'AMOUR (Pat Edley)
 1.1 g for 3. Wellingborough
 and Premier 10.1, £3 min.
 10. Nervous. Tmo: £5.50;
 11.0, £2.90. Dual Forecast:
 Straight Forecast: £61.79.
 Tmo: £62.80.

MISTIC (D Begg) 11-2: 2.
 3. **Flower Of America** 12-1
 complete, Newmarket. Tmo:
 11.0, £5.30. Dual Forecast:
 Straight Forecast: £33.98.
 Tmo: £144.10. NR: Chge

Pool of £58,598.09 can-
 take today.

10. **Quadrant** £20.30.
 1. **Place** £129.93.

KESTONE
 OF GROSVENOR (R Havin)
 1-4: 2. **Fairly** 25-1. 15
 in Victory. Tmo: 20.20;
 30. Dual Forecast: £56.30.
 Straight Forecast: £21.32. Tmo:

[illegible]

J.P. Sheffield

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Appleby aged 74

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Foreign fields

Chris Hewett on the imminent English rugby season, page 22

sport

Palmer power
Britain's first swimming gold in Seville, page 22

City open to £7m offers for Kinkladze

Football
ALAN NIXON

Manchester City are preparing to sell their coveted Georgian midfielder Georgi Kinkladze and are open to offers of £7m. Kinkladze's future at Maine Road has been put into doubt by his poor form in City's disappointing start to the season of two defeats and a draw.

Liverpool were linked with a move for Kinkladze yesterday after the manager, Roy Evans, watched him in action last week. Kinkladze has an unwritten agreement with the chairman, Francis Lee, that he will be sold if City receive a bid of £7m.

Nottingham Forest are pricing striker Dean Saunders out of a move to Everton by asking for £1m. Howard Kendall, the Everton manager, is willing to pay around £600,000 for the 33-year-old Welshman.

Blackburn Rovers are giving the Norwegian centre-back Tore Pedersen the chance to fill Henning Berg's boots. The former Oldham player has joined Blackburn for training with a view to a £700,000 transfer from the Hamburg side St Pauli following Berg's recent transfer to Manchester United.

Tony Dorigo will tomorrow leave Leeds to join Graeme Souness at Torino. The former England international's free transfer to the Serie B club has been put on hold for 24 hours because of a national holiday. But the Australian-born 31-year-old has agreed personal terms with Souness.

Dorigo's erstwhile teammate, Tony Yeboah, looks set to reject a move to Newell's Old Boys of Argentina for family reasons. Yeboah's agent, Hayden Evans, said: "Tony has to give a decision today, but I don't think he would want to take his family out to South America."

Terry Venables is preparing to take complete control of Portsmouth. Venables became chairman of Pompey last November and bought a 51 per cent share in the club from the former managing director Martin Gregory in February for £1.

At the same time, the former England coach secured a three-year option to buy the 45 per cent of shares which Gregory still holds. Venables is now to spend £3.5m on the shares.

Dettori praises 'the best in world'

Racing

RICHARD EDMONDSON
reports from York

We saw the last of Singspiel here yesterday and the manner of his departure made the parting all the more sorrowful.

The noble five-year-old has a maximum of two races remaining in his glorious career following victory in the International Stakes on the Knavesmire and any further witnesses to a live performance will have to fly across the Atlantic for the pleasure. Singspiel leaves Europe with earnings closing on £3.7m, which makes him the most productive thoroughbred in history to be based on this continent, but his value cannot be measured in sterling alone. He is an animal who pleases the eye as much as the pocket.

Once again yesterday he threw in front of us a unique blend of calibre and happiness which, by any rationalisation, must make him the best horse in the world.

This was the certain, if hardly impartial, assessment of Frankie Dettori, who, in fairness, has had some top-of-the-range vehicles beneath him.

"He is the best horse I have ever ridden," the Italian said. "He has beaten them all. He's beaten Heliosio, he's beaten the best American horses and now he's beaten Bosra Sham. He's undoubtedly the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world."

"I've ridden great horses like Lammtarra and Hailing, who was electric in this race last year, but Singspiel is the best."

If the roses had to come showering down on Singspiel it was appropriate that it should



Frankie Dettori celebrates as he passes the winning post on Singspiel in the International Stakes at York yesterday

Photograph: Robert Hallam

be at the setting of a searing Ebor meeting. Around the paddock there were rascals flitting, in an alternative function as fans, which lent the impression of a Movietone FA Cup final.

Four horses may not constitute the most thunderous spectacle the turf has ever seen, but that had not stoked anticipation for the occasion and there were plenty wanting to get

on with it. The jockeys bounded down the steps into an empty parade ring and then the racecourse announcer requested them to mount, which would have been considerably easier if any horseflesh had been visible.

Desert King was the restless figure once the stalls opened, throwing his head around as he was restrained at the tail. Up front an Indian file of Ben-

ny The Dip, Singspiel and racing's first lady, Bosra Sham, developed.

The first decisive moment came when the turf's Cinderella lost a shoe on the entrance to the straight and for her there would be no fairy-tale ending. The second came when Dettori depressed the accelerator. "I wanted to make a race of it because I knew my horse was a great battler, so three and a half

furlongs out I said let's go," the Italian reported. Singspiel hurtled clear and the rest was burst.

Michael Stoute and Sheikh Mohammed, the winning trainer and owner, formed the bookends at the horse's head when Singspiel was led in. The former had perspiration about his face, which was due to the weather rather than worry. "He was always travelling so well that we didn't have a single anxious mo-

ment," Stoute said. "It was a superbly professional display."

All that remains is the final show at Hollywood Park in the Breeders' Cup Classic, which may be preceded by a prep race over the water. "I've loved having him and when he goes we'll miss him enormously," Stoute said. "We'll embrace anyone who saw the horse called Singspiel."

Today's York card, page 21

Young given Test debut by Australia

Cricket

Shaun Young, the Tasmanian all-rounder, will win his first Test cap against England at The Oval. Young, who has impressed in his debut county season with Gloucestershire this summer, was told his good news yesterday after Australia's first practice session in preparation for the final Ashes Test, which begins tomorrow.

Young played in the victory against Kent at Canterbury after being called up to join Australia's squad at the end of last week. Mike Kasprowicz has been confirmed as the replacement for the injured Jason Gillespie, while Young comes in for Paul Reiffel.

Devon Malcolm missed yesterday's England practice at The Oval after being given permission to attend a benefit lunch. Malcolm's absence meant that the England squad gathered in south London was cut to 12. The Glamorgan off-spinner Robert Croft also missed the session because he was due to attend last night's England Cricket Board disciplinary hearing in Bristol.

David Houghton, the Worcestershire coach, is backing his bowlers to come out on top against Allan Donald and colleagues when they tackle Warwickshire in the County Championship derby at Edgbaston today.

Houghton is expecting a wicket loaded in favour of the bowlers in a game vital to both sides' hopes of featuring in the battle for the Championship. Worcestershire are currently the better placed in fourth position - 22 points behind the non-playing leaders, Gloucestershire, and with a game in hand - but

a victory for Warwickshire will rekindle their chances.

Houghton, keen to leave Worcestershire in a strong position before he quits New Road to become the national coach of his native Zimbabwe next week, said: "I don't think we have beaten Warwickshire at Edgbaston for a long time in the Championship."

Worcestershire's former England spinner, Richard Illingworth, could play his first Championship match of the season after suffering a shoulder injury in a Bradford League game at the start of the season, but the former England fast bowler Phil Newport will be out of action for the rest of the season with an Achilles problem.

Another former England player, Warwickshire's opener and vice-captain Nick Knight, is also poised to return after being out of action for seven weeks with a broken little finger. He will lead the side in the continuing absence of the captain, Tim Munton, while the second-choice captain, Andy Moles, will have a late check on his damaged finger.

Second-placed Kent, 10 points behind Gloucestershire with a game in hand, will have their opening batsman, David Fulton, back when they tackle Somerset at Taunton. Fulton broke a knuckle a month ago against Middlesex.

The other key match pits third-placed Glamorgan against Northamptonshire at Atherstone. The Welshmen, just six points behind Kent, have England Under-19 spinner Dean Cook standing by to fill in for Croft.

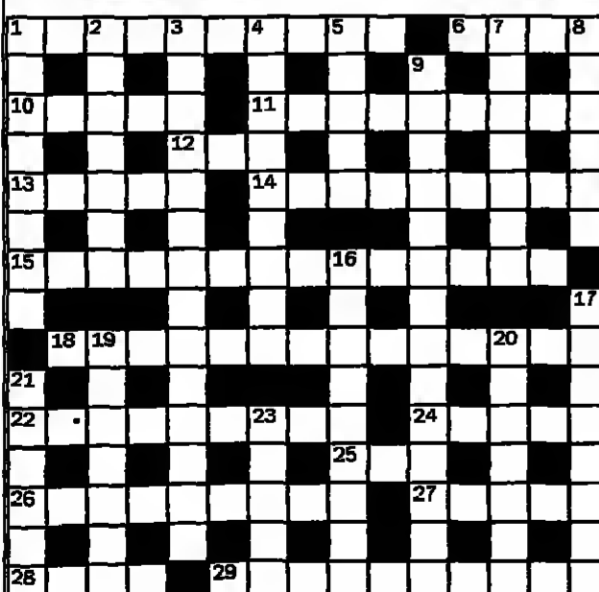
Australia (Shaun Young vs England, The Oval, starting tomorrow); New Zealand (M. E. Waugh, M. T. G. Elliott, G. S. Brown, M. E. Waugh, S. R. Waugh, R. T. Ponting, T. A. Sefton, S. A. Jones, S. R. Waugh, M. S. Kasprowicz, G. D. McGrath).

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3382 Wednesday 20 August

By Aquila

Thursday's solution



1 Across: Seeing Brideshead the novel way - going over it inside? (10)
2 Down: Doctor after morning rounds (4)
3 Across: Copper with unusual air in papal court (5)
4 Down: A day kept by seagoing troops for pickles? (9)
5 Across: Gracious encouragement to nag, for example (3)
6 Down: Call names in incongruous language (5)
7 Across: Like a brother, providing ballad for each male descendant (3-6)
8 Down: One picks up damaged tees in sand-traps (14)
9 Across: Daisy-picking Jay in Long Island? (3,5,6)
10 Down: Late hat in a spot - that should be entertaining! (5-4)
11 Across: Call for former partner with deed (5)
12 Down: Sudden flight from US city with maiden (3)
13 Across: Indian mystic with Amish hair-style (9)
14 Down: And here, in Rome, a moral principle (5)
15 Across: Third man to opening pair (4)
16 Down: Art cheaply fashioned from an original model (10)
17 Across: Wrenches may appear in this form of public transport (8)
18 Down: Different sort of tank to hold rain, possibly (7)
19 Across: Hairy boxer, say, with account that is disappointing at the close (6,3,5)
20 Down: Ample site prepared for such slow filming? (4-5)
21 Across: Headless wyvern could make one apprehensive (5)
22 Down: Stone-dresser embraces girl in New York square (7)
23 Across: He opens play with request for amatory ailment (6)
24 Down: Demurest tenant thrown out - and that's putting it mildly! (14)
25 Across: Found to be less habit-forming (9)
26 Down: Heavens! It's about state that is arcane (8)
27 Across: Symbol, we hear, that clashes with an aristocrat (4-3)
28 Down: Total commonly in bad car accident (5-2)
29 Across: Motive for intense dislike (6)
30 Down: Type of printer used for Lear's nonsense? (5)

Reviled Robinson steps down at Wigan

Rugby League
DAVE HADFIELD

Jack Robinson bowed to intense pressure yesterday by resigning as chairman of Wigan.

Robinson, chairman for the past five years and a director for 18, announced his decision after his vice-chairman, Tom Rathbone, resigned earlier in the day.

The two men have been the object of an increasingly vitriolic campaign to remove them by shareholders and other supporters furious at the sale of the club's Central Park ground to the supermarket group, Tesco.

They had fought off one attempt to unseat them at a shareholders' meeting but had called another in September after allegations of irregularities in the voting.

Robinson also appeared in court earlier this year, where he was found not guilty on charges of attempting to pervert the course of justice.

A section of Wigan fans, however, considered him guilty of leading the club into decline and the potential disaster of having nowhere to play in Wigan.

The sale of the ground to Tesco means that, at most, the club has one more season at Central Park, and there are no concrete proposals for a new home within the town. The

alternative is a loose arrangement to play as temporary tenants at Bolton Wanderers' new Reebok Stadium, but many supporters have made it clear that they bitterly oppose that solution.

A delegation marched on the Rugby League's headquarters in Leeds two weeks ago and, even among crowds that have shrunk to a financially ruinous 6,500, the clamour for Robinson to go has grown louder.

One group of fans has taken to standing on a road-bridge outside the ground with a partial view of the pitch, carrying banners declaring that they will not pay to enter until Robinson departs.

Now they have their way. Announcing his decision, Robinson - an antiques dealer and, like Rathbone, a member of the so-called Gang of Four directors who revitalised Wigan in the early 1980s - said yesterday: "I felt that I had taken Wigan Rugby League as far as I could. It is now up to the chairman and the new board to go forward."

The new chairman is Arthur Thomas, who joined the board earlier this season. The only other surviving director is David Bradshaw, the club's chief executive.

Apart from improving performances on the field - Wigan are fifth in Super League and were beaten by both Sheffield and Salford last week - the board will have to resolve the matter of the stadium.

One possibility that now opens up is sharing with the football club Wigan Athletic and rugby union club Crutley at a projected new ground in the town that has the local council's backing.

The football club's chairman, Dave Whelan, who has been in bitter conflict with Rathbone and Robinson, has said that he would not discuss ground-sharing while they remained in charge.

The former Wigan player, Martin Offiah, could make a surprise return to the London Broncos' side for the rest of the season. Offiah was thought to have played his last match for the club when his agreement with them ran out and the two parties were unable to settle a new one last month.

Since then, Offiah's contract with Bedford rugby union has expired and a move to a First Division London union club has not materialised. He has been in discussions with the Broncos' chief executive, Tony Rea, and could even return to their side for the match against Halifax next Monday.

Meanwhile, London have transfer-listed their scrum-half, Josh White, at £100,000. White has already had talks with Hull and Salford but the Broncos insist that he is under contract to them for next season.

LITTLE ORPHANED PICHITTRA

Pichitra is only three but at this young age she has already encountered betrayal, abuse and death.

Her Father only married her Mother on the promise of a dowry from her family. He mistreated her family. He mistreated her family. He mistreated her family.

Pichitra was naturally very distraught when she arrived at the Orphanage and, although she has settled in, she has not yet been seen to smile. Sadly, Pichitra's mother died early this year.

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